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BUILDING THE NEST: HOW NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKING TEACHERS (NESTs) IN THE TEFL FIELD DEVELOP INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

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BUILDING THE NEST:

HOW NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKING TEACHERS (NESTs) IN THE TEFL FIELD DEVELOP INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

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with a Concentration in Curriculum Studies

by

Emily S. Kraus

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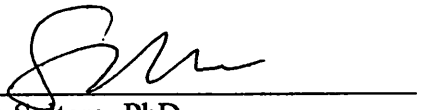
We approve the dissertation of Emily S. Kraus.



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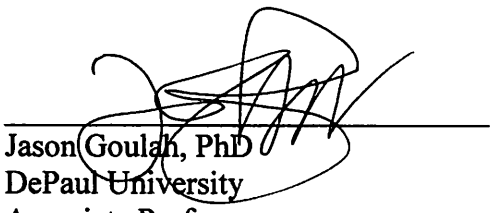

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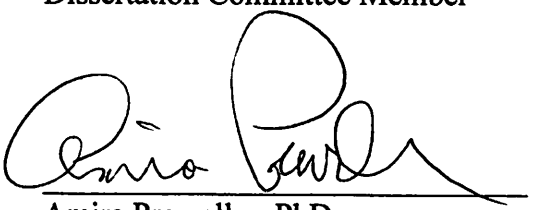

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I certify that I am the sole author of this dissertation. Any assistance received in the preparation of this dissertation has been acknowledged and disclosed within it. Any sources utilized, including the use of data, ideas and words, those quoted directly or paraphrased, have been cited. I certify that I have prepared this dissertation according program guidelines, as directed.

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ABSTRACT

The role of an English foreign language teacher requires expertise in the English language and pedagogical skills to make the learning process approachable for a variety of students. There are certain characteristics that make a person ostensibly suitable for the role such as patience, intelligence, trustworthiness and creativity. However, the development of teachers is often shaped by their certification preparation, experiences in the field of education and the lessons they learn from their students. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to examine how native English speaking teachers (NESTs) in Costa Rica teaching English as a foreign language develop their knowledge, skills and critical awareness.

This case study was guided by the following research questions: 1.) How do NESTs' understanding of their students' culture shape their teaching practice, and based on this understanding, how do teachers adapt to students' needs and behavior?, 2.) How do NESTs' perceptions of and adaptations to their host country shape their teaching practice?, and 3.) How do NESTs perceive and respond to the influences of English and U.S. American culture in Costa Rica? To answer these questions, six native English speaking teachers were interviewed regarding their experiences as English teachers. Additionally, documents from Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certificate programs were collected and analyzed.

The teachers' responses and the documents collected were analyzed from a sociocultural theoretical perspective and a critical pedagogical lens while incorporating an intercultural communicative competence model. From this analysis three themes emerged that address how these six native English speaking teachers learned and developed during their time in Costa Rica. The themes are: 1.) Teachers' perceptions of and adaptation to Costa Rica, 2.) Teachers' perceptions of and interactions with their students, and 3.) Teachers' attitudes towards TEFL and

responses to students' needs in the TEFL classroom. The findings suggest that teachers who travel to new countries learn from their new host communities, as well as their students, and adapt to the new environment. The teachers also adjusted their behaviors and manners of instruction to serve the needs of their students. The implications for the field of English foreign language education show a need for further intercultural competency training for native English speaking teachers, and a critical analysis of training materials that impact all TEFL teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders.

Keywords: intercultural competence, teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), native English speaking teacher (NEST), English language learner (ELL), Costa Rica, teacher preparation, sociocultural theory, intercultural communicative competence model, critical pedagogy

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Dedication

To Mom, Dad, Linsey & Anne
For letting me fly,
and always welcoming me home,
with hugs and fruit.

Chapter 1
Introduction

Being a Spanish language learner while teaching English as a foreign language in Costa Rica lead me down an exciting path within intercultural education. The position of being a foreign language learner while teaching English as a foreign language helped me understand some of the struggles students experience as they learned English from multiple sources. As a native English speaking teacher (NEST) who quickly found a job in a new country with low proficiency in Spanish, I also understood that our language learning journeys were different. Learning English for Costa Rican students is often a necessary way to obtain a better job in a time of global pressure to learn English. For two years, I lived in Costa Rica and worked at a private language and cultural center teaching English to adults and children in a country that promotes bilingualism in English and Spanish. My work as a native English speaking teacher who traveled from the United States to Costa Rica was shaped by the people I encountered every day in Costa Rica. While teaching my native language, I learned the native language of many of my students and colleagues. This experience continues to support and challenge my understanding of intercultural competence in foreign language education.

Language education introduces learners to an intercultural world. English foreign language education is both a helpful tool for many learners and a sociocultural, political act that impacts learners and teachers (Pennycook, 1999). There are an estimated 1.75 billion people learning English across the globe, with projections that the number will reach two billion by 2020 (British Council, 2013). The British Council reported estimates of well over 90 million people learning English in Latin America as the number of jobs in tourism escalates, and as employers increasingly require English proficiency for a variety of jobs (British Council, 2013). Around the world English has become the primary language used in sectors such as business,

science (Aguilar-Sánchez, 2005), and trade (Solano Campos, 2012). It is also the dominant language spoken in the United Nations and across international lines of communication and technology (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996). As English spreads through Latin America, countries such as Costa Rica promote bilingualism in Spanish and English (Ministerio de Educación Público, 2016). Costa Rica has a population of 4,301,712 people, nine percent of which are immigrants (Silva et al., 2017). Some of the immigrants are native English speakers and teachers. Roughly 15% of Costa Rica's population speaks English (Oller, 2016), which is close to 730,880 people (Central Intelligence Agency, 2016). Proponents of a bilingual Costa Rica argue that fluency in English and Spanish will help citizens take advantage of greater employment opportunities and to make global connections (Aguilar-Sánchez, 2005; Oller 2016). Spanish is the official language of Costa Rica, but not the only native language in the country. There are native English speakers in the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica (Aguilar-Sánchez, 2005) as well as speakers of six indigenous languages: Bribrí, Cabécar, Guaimí, Teribe, Brunca/Boruca, Maleku and Guatuso (Ministerio de Planificación Nacional y Política Económica, 2014). Being bilingual in Spanish and English is viewed as the ticket to success.

Globalization has led to the rise of English language dissemination and to the development of global Englishes and world English (Brutt-Griffler, 2002). The result of that dissemination through transcultural forces is a variety of English spoken throughout the world. These varieties of English play a major part in the global flow of culture, knowledge, religion and economics. Labeling English as *the* international language neglects to recognize the complexity of English speakers' participation in globalization (Pennycook, 2007). While there are many forms of English, Standard U.S. American English and Standard British English are often viewed as the varieties that afford speakers more power and opportunities (Solano Campos,

2012) and therefore non-standard varieties of English are not validated (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007). This problematic stance is often seen throughout the world through fewer job opportunities for speakers of non-standard varieties of English.

As Costa Rica promotes the use of critical pedagogy in their classrooms (MEP, 2016), educators must keep in mind that teaching and learning English is a sociopolitical act that contributes to intercultural relationships, as well as power and cultural dynamics between nations and people (Hall & Eggington, 2000). Therefore, NESTs who speak varieties of Standard English are called to critically reflect on their identities and roles in the dissemination of this language (Lee, Moss, & Coughlin, 2011). As English foreign language education continues to spread, so will the need for interculturally competent English foreign language teachers. This is the impetus behind this research study.

This qualitative case study explores how NESTs in Costa Rica perceive the relationship between language and culture, as well as how the relationships between teachers and students shape the language learning process. It was conducted at a language and cultural center in Costa Rica to investigate the perceptions and beliefs of NESTs regarding their intercultural teaching practice. Chapter two presents a review of the literature on the theories of sociocultural theory, intercultural competence, and critical pedagogy in the TEFL field as well as the research conducted on NESTs' teaching practice. Chapter three explicates the use of a qualitative case study as the methodology used for the study. Chapters four, five and six will present the findings of the research and provide an analysis of the data, as well as elaborate on connections between the data and the theoretical framework presented. Chapter seven concludes with a discussion of the findings and implications for English foreign language education and the suggestions for future research.

Problem Statement

In the field of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), NESTs are sometimes lauded as the preferred choice for English instructors. However, their ability to teach requires more than just being a native speaker of English (Snow & Campbell, 2017). When NESTs travel to new countries to teach English, they may be unfamiliar with the cultures and languages of the host community and their students. In their new host community, they have a lot to learn before they step into the classroom. Coming from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds can add social distance between teachers and students, making it difficult to relate to one another (Arriaza & Wagner, 2012). NESTs who have low intercultural competence and linguistic skills in the host community may impose their own teaching styles instead of learning and utilizing the teaching and learning styles of the local culture. This often leads to a disconnect between teachers and students turning students off from learning (Han, 2005). It is essential for NESTs to address this disconnect and strive to improve their practice to better teach their students.

Purpose Statement

Teachers may serve their students by performing perfunctory roles in which they simply transfer information into the minds of their students, or as facilitators who provide optimum learning environments by focusing on the identities of their students (Hawkins, 2004). In an effort to provide good learning experiences, teachers may develop professional relationships with students to get to know their needs, interests, learning styles and desires for learning English. Developing such relationships not only widens teachers' perspective of life in a new country, but also helps them understand students' expectations of their teachers (Snow & Campbell, 2017). The purpose of this case study is to explore how NESTs understand the culture of their host country and students, how they perceive their relationships with their students, and how they

engage their students by developing knowledge, skills and abilities in the students' native language and culture. This research study is guided by the following questions.

Research Questions

1. How do NESTs' understanding of their students' culture shape their teaching practice, and based on this understanding, how do teachers adapt to students' needs and behavior?
2. How do NESTs' perceptions of and adaptations to their host country shape their teaching practice?
3. How do NESTs perceive and respond to the influences of English and U.S. American culture in Costa Rica?

The above questions guided this research study to understand the perspectives and experiences of NESTs teaching in a country outside their home. This qualitative case study consisted of interviews with NESTs and document analysis of teacher preparation materials and TEFL certificate preparation and promotional materials. The themes that arose were framed in light of these questions.

Overview of Methodology

This research study was conducted through qualitative methodology. A qualitative research design is one that investigates how people experience, understand, interpret and reproduce the social world around them (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). It focuses on the particular rather than general (King & Horrocks, 2010) and is used to analyze and investigate real-life events and phenomena bound by time and place (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A qualitative research design is suited to investigate the perspective and experiences of teachers in their particular social and cultural contexts of teaching English as a foreign language. This case study took place in one private language and cultural center in Costa Rica that offers classes to adults and children, the majority of whom take classes on nights or

weekends. Generally, the English teachers at this center are relatively new to Costa Rica and retain their teaching position at that center for an average of one to five years. All are native English speaking teachers who originate from a country in which English is the dominant language. In this case study, six teachers were interviewed about their daily teaching practices and philosophies to explore how their perceptions of students and relationships with students shape their practice. I also collected training and promotional materials used in their TEFL certificate programs, as well as documents they use in their English foreign language classroom. The documents collected were a resource book from a TEFL certification school where the teachers studied, promotional materials from TEFL certification schools, the websites of the TEFL certificate schools, textbooks the NESTs used to instruct their students and teachers' lesson plans. The teachers and I engaged in conversation about their teaching experience in Costa Rica as well as their experiences navigating a country as foreigners. They reflected on their understanding of culture and language as it plays a role in the English foreign language classroom, specifically for their Spanish-speaking, Latin American students, the vast majority of whom are Costa Rican.

Rationale and Significance

In the age of rapid globalization and increased mobility, many native English speakers are enticed by the opportunity to travel the world and teach. Spurred by a desire and pressure to increase English proficiency in Latin America, some administrators and hiring managers in English language programs and at language centers are compelled to hire native English speakers to teach English (Aslan & Thompson, 2017; Ruecker & Ives, 2014). Yet, foreign-born NESTs are often unfamiliar with the local culture, community and language of their host country. They may also be unprepared to address the sociocultural and political variables in the English foreign language classroom. While there has been a call to include sociocultural and political aspects in

language teacher preparation programs (Duff & Uchida, 1997), many TEFL certification programs have not made changes to meet this need (Dogancay-Aktuna, 2006). However, it is still important that TEFL teachers have critical intercultural awareness and an understanding of the local culture (Agudelo, 2007). In this inherently sociocultural, political and intercultural field, it is problematic for TEFL teachers and their students not to have intercultural awareness of the local culture. The sociocultural nature of language learning suggests that language learners are socialized into a specific language variety (Kramsch, 1993; Lantolf, 2004). Teachers who go through this socialization process in the students' first language may better understand the connection between the first and target languages.

There is an inseparable relationship between language and culture. Foreign language teachers must not only be aware of this relationship, but also be open and adaptive to the multilingual and multicultural aspects within their foreign language classroom (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2009). They must also recognize that these concepts are constantly evolving and interacting with theories and practices of foreign language education. Therefore, an intercultural educator should be in continuous reflection and engagement with these concepts, and incorporate them in their practice (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2009). By incorporating a critical pedagogy stance, this research project seeks to build understanding in the language learning process as it is aided or hindered by student teacher relationships and teachers' intercultural competence. By interviewing NESTs in their daily pedagogical practice and analyzing the TEFL certification course documents, websites of TEFL certification schools and the instructional materials used by those teachers, this case study demonstrates how NESTs perceive and understand their students' culture and language, and how those perspectives shape their teaching practice.

Role and Positionality of the Researcher

Just as it is necessary for language educators to reflect on their position in the world through the lens of language, culture and identity (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2009), it is also important for researchers to address how their positionality and social location impacts every step of the research study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). My past experience as a NEST in Costa Rica informs this study and prompted a desire to learn more about the perspectives of NESTs in Costa Rica. As a former NEST of Spanish-speaking Latin American students in Costa Rica, I undoubtedly bring certain assumptions and perspectives. This research study stems in part from my experience trying to close the social distance between my students and me so that I would better serve them. Social distance means the different perspectives, beliefs and experiences individuals have due to their social identities and the ensuing difficulties those individuals experience as they attempt to understand and become intimate with each other (Arriaza & Wagner, 2012). In my four years teaching English language learners (ELLs) outside of my home country, I sometimes felt this social distance lead to confusion and misunderstandings and therefore, I am compelled to understand how individuals can reduce that gap and find common ground on which to build relationships and intercultural understandings.

My social identity as a native English speaking, U.S. American, white, middle-class, able-bodied, college educated, cisgender woman influences the way that I approach this research study and the field of English foreign language education. Those identities have opened access to education in general and contributed to securing past teaching positions as a NEST. Many of these identities place me in dominant, hegemonic groups, thereby making it difficult to see the perspective of the "other." This calls me to consistently engage with those who come from different social backgrounds to gain a wider perspective into human experiences, especially those of ELLs and teachers from different social backgrounds. While it is impossible to be

completely without bias, I continuously reflect on the assumptions I make as a researcher and how my identity markers may shape my perspective.

These identity markers and my experience with TEFL also play a role between the teacher participants and myself as the researcher. The manner in which I presented myself in dress and speech may have shaped the relationship and ability to build rapport between us (King & Horrocks, 2010). The teachers were aware that I taught at the language and cultural center, and that I was a doctoral student conducting research. My position as a former TEFL teacher, who was very familiar with their place of work and with some of their colleagues may have given me an insider perspective to the details of the center, and how they conducted lessons and interacted with students. I was able to understand the participants as they discussed certain programs and common practices without explanation. I could anticipate the proper dress code so as to not make them feel uncomfortable, and I understood the common TEFL language that is spoken at this language and cultural center. As I became acquainted with them through multiple interviews, I learned more about their perspectives of Costa Rica, teaching English, and their students. I worked to close the social distances between us and understand their worldviews.

Key Terminology

Some common terms and themes are used frequently in this study that are defined below. *Intercultural competence* is a process of understanding how culture influences people's worldviews, the way they interact and build relationships with others. It requires the recognition that others perceive the world from their own specific cultural standpoint, and that to effectively communicate across cultures, both interlocutors must accept the viewpoints of the other (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2009). The first language a person acquires is called the *native language*, mother tongue, home language or L1 (first language) (Soltero, 2016). This is inherently linked to the *native culture*, home culture or C1 (first culture). The second language a student studies is

referred to as the *target language* or L2 (second language) (Soltero, 2016). Similarly the culture linked to that language is referred to as *target culture* or C2 (second culture). When people travel abroad and learn the local language and culture while immersed in another country, they learn the *host language* and *host culture.* For the purpose of this study the host languages and host cultures will imply the languages and cultures of the students (Barratt & Kontra, 2000).

In the English foreign language classroom, there are identifiers for teachers and learners as well. *Native English speaking teachers* (NESTs*)* are teachers who have acquired English in early childhood. *Non-native English speaking teachers* (NNESTs*)* are the teachers who learned English later in life and have a different first language (Chun, 2014; Macaro & Lee, 2013; Menard-Warwick, 2008). These teachers usually have the experience of being an *English language learner (*ELL*)* (Menard-Warwick, 2008). The field of English language education is called *Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages* (TESOL)- a term that includes the practices of *teaching English as a foreign language* (TEFL) and *teaching English as a second language*, (TESL) as well as a professional association (TESOL, n.d.). These terms will be used throughout this study.

Guiding Theories

This research project is based on a theoretical framework that addresses how understanding language and culture shape NESTs' teaching practice in the TEFL classroom. These theories will be further analyzed in chapter two. Sociocultural theory, critical pedagogy, and intercultural communicative competence are deeply embedded in the relationships between teachers and students, and in the TEFL classroom. Utilizing Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, the foreign language educator understands that students have been socialized into their cultural groups and this impacts their linguistic repertoire. Humans acquire their first language as well as additional languages through social interactions and mediation. Their learning is

mediated by tools, their teachers and their peers. According to sociocultural theory, ELLs do not just acquire English, but participate in the social aspects of learning to become more proficient. In the process of learning a second language, ELLs gain an additional language, add to their linguistic repertoire and reconstruct their identity (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2000). NESTs consider the various outside influences that shape ELLs' experiences of English foreign language education. Similarly, as NESTs themselves learn to adapt to a new country and learn a second language, they are also socialized to their host country and culture. These sociocultural processes for both teachers and students are explored in this study.

From a critical pedagogical perspective, Freire (1999) argued that students must be active agents in their learning, and that teachers cultivate skills to question what they learn and why they learn it. Teachers and students are called to be active agents in their education, rather than passive recipients of information. As they become literate, they also learn to read their environment and to question the systems and social structures around them (Freire, 1999). Critical pedagogy invites students and teachers to investigate who has power and privilege in a given context, and how that affects those who are marginalized. Such questions should lead to a disruption in the inequalities and injustices that marginalize individuals and communities. Power dynamics in the TEFL field that are addressed in this research study include notions of native speaker privileges, accent discrimination and the rapid spread of standard English across the world. These dynamics impact ELLs who study English for a variety of reasons, NESTs who travel to teach, and NNESTs.

In addition to sociocultural theory and critical pedagogy, Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence exemplifies how language learners incorporate five *savoirs* (French for knowledges), or attitudes, knowledges and skills to successfully navigate

intercultural spaces. Developing these five savoirs includes a development of knowledge regarding the relationships between ELLs and NESTs to the TEFL field, the ability to interpret and compare other cultures to one's own, the ability to decenter one's self and be open to others and their cultures, the ability to learn more about others and their cultures and to develop critical consciousness towards cultures outside their own (Byram, 1997). As NESTs travel to a new country to teach, they must develop intercultural competence along with their students. This model is integral to the analysis of teachers' perceptions towards their students, as well as the transition to a new country. Sociocultural theory, critical pedagogy and the intercultural communicative competence model intersect in this research study that examines the experiences of NESTs who move to a new country, enter into intercultural spaces and relationships, and learn to teach English as a foreign language in a community that is different from their home community.

The following review of the literature examines these theories in depth. It also explores the historical use of English varieties in Costa Rica, as well as the relationship between the U.S. and Costa Rica. Next, is an analysis of the research that defines and investigates the need for teachers to develop their intercultural competence to better serve ELLs. Then, the review highlights how knowing their students' first language benefits NESTs' teaching practice and ability to relate to students. In addition, the literature review includes the perceptions of ELLs who study English from both NESTs and NNESTs, and how they view teachers who speak their native language. Finally, the relationships between teachers and students and how they pertain to the intercultural and political practice of teaching English as a foreign language will be examined.

Chapter 2
Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This review of the literature covers the development of NESTs' intercultural competence within the context of English foreign language education in Costa Rica. It is framed within the perspectives of sociocultural theory, critical pedagogy and the intercultural communicative competence model of language education. The review is couched in these theories as they pertain to TEFL education.

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory, developed by Vygotsky (1978), is the supposition that knowledge is first built on a social level and second on a personal level, or, in Vygotskian terms, that learning precedes development and happens on two planes, first on an inter-psychological level and then on an intra-psychological level. Humans develop their mental functions through social interactions. According to sociocultural theory, physical as well as symbolic artifacts, such as numbers, writings and speech are constructed by culture and passed along as people become socialized to that culture. Humans use these symbols and tools available in their cultural environment to understand and regulate their relationships with others. As humans internalize what they learn through their environments, they start to embed it in their memory to use again in the future (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007).

One of the aforementioned tools used to make meaning of the world is language (Lantolf, 2000). Kramsch (1993) argued that by learning a new language, one practices a new social and personal voice. This means that humans are socialized into the language and culture of their first language, as well as additional languages they learn (Kramsch, 1993). Lantolf and Pavlenko (2000) supported the notion that learners not only acquire new linguistic skills, but also

participate in the learning process through interactions with others. Adding to the idea that language is acquired by gathering information and storing it in the brain such as a receptacle holds objects, they also believe that a major part of learning is the participation by the learner through social engagement (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2000). Those that participate in the learning process impact each other.

A component intimately connected to sociocultural theory is Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD). The ZPD refers to the distance between students' current level of development in necessary skills and knowledge and the potential level they can reach through the guidance of informed peers or their teacher. Teachers structure learning opportunities for the students' skills to mature and grow. It is through these social interactions that learners build on their previous knowledge. Scaffolding is the educational method based on this notion, and sociocultural theory posits that language is the tool to facilitate this growth. When students share the same first language they often rely on their classmates to help make meaning of what is taught in the target language, and they use the first language to provide one another with explanations (Moore, 2013). As students collaborate to understand and develop an additional language, they work within their ZPD (Soltero, 2016). These efforts to scaffold language learning are part of mediation (Lantolf, 2002).

Students learn additional languages through mediation. In the foreign language classroom, teachers and informed peers mediate students' learning. The use of tools such as books, equipment or instruments also mediate students' learning. Students themselves learn to mediate their learning by talking to themselves in the target language. Some foreign language learners respond to their teachers' questions or prompts by speaking privately to themselves when the teacher does not call on them directly. As they try out new words and phrases on their

own, they then use those words and phrases to speak to others (Lantolf, 2002). In these private and social engagements, they learn from their teachers, peers and other interlocutors.

In this mediated learning process, students should receive comprehensible input or information about the language that they can understand (Krashen, 1982). However, students may encounter anxieties and other negative feelings that prevent them from acquiring and internalizing the language. These negative feelings and emotional response to the learning process is referred to as the *affective filter* (Dulay & Burt, 1977). When students are uneasy and experience anxieties, low self-confidence, or embarrassment, the affective filter is often raised and thus the information given to the student is not received, and less learning occurs. Students' affective filter may be raised by a variety of differing factors. What causes one student's affective filter to rise may not cause a different student's affective filter to rise (Krashen, 1982). However, a good teacher knows how to lower students' affective filters so learning can occur. For example, teachers who learn about their students and the things that they like to discuss can make them feel more comfortable and open to learning (Lems, Miller, & Soro, 2017).

As they study additional languages, learners become socialized to a variety of that language. Within language education, there are additional tools that people use to build linguistic skills. One of the tools is social languages. Gee (2004) argued that all languages are social languages. By that he meant that as one studies a foreign language such as English, Spanish or Japanese, they learn a variety of that language that is specific to the social context. They must learn to use that language to navigate multiple settings and thus fit a particular social situation (Gee, 2004). This socialization process is the manifestation of sociocultural theory. It is appropriate to use this theory when studying language education and the relationships between

teachers and students because the language classroom is a site of intercultural exchange where students are socialized to a new language and culture.

People build linguistic skills through social interactions that teach them various Discourses (Gee, 2006). Discourses are the ways that people express themselves and participate in social languages, in addition to speaking the language itself. Gee intentionally used a capital "D" for this concept of Discourse to distinguish it from the concept of discourse that is understood to be conversation, discussion or stories. He claimed that the components of Discourses include manners of dressing, speaking, writing and behaving in order to fit a particular identity or role. For example, the Discourse of a lawyer requires one dress a particular way, understand legal terminology and behave appropriately in court or other judicial settings. By learning all the ways to express oneself in a given role, they are likely to be recognized as that role. Discourses are taught through social institutions, such as schools or educational centers. In such institutions, students learn to perform their role through teachers, books and other objects attributed to the role. They also learn how to use such objects. For example, a person learning to play basketball learns through a basketball court, with a basketball and a coach how to be recognized as a basketball player (Gee, 2006).

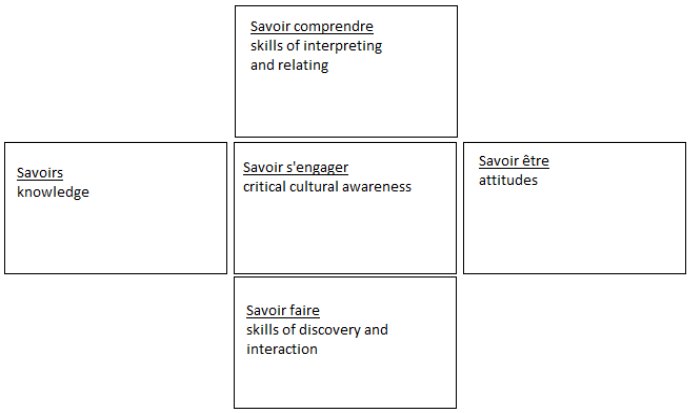
Part of this socialization process includes learning to speak with different vocabulary, rate and intonation in different settings. In educational settings, students are socialized to follow the role as students, but to also acclimate to different social situations. Similarly, as ELLs learn to speak English, they learn more than just how to put the words together with correct grammar. Students may be fluent in English, but will encounter communicative, cultural and social challenges if they do not learn the social language within their field of choice or social setting. In order to participate in a variety of social and intercultural settings, they must also learn to how

express themselves appropriately using social languages. They must understand the words and tones commonly used to speak with a friend, and the contrasting words and tones expected when speaking to an authority figure or employer in intercultural spaces (Gee, 2004). In such cases, students must also build their intercultural communicative competence skills.

Intercultural Communicative Competence Model

As NESTs and ELLs interact with one another, the NESTs are called to incorporate their knowledge, attitude and skills in intercultural contexts. This requires an examination of intercultural communicative competence as outlined by Michael Byram, (1997) who presented a model of development for those who learn to interact in intercultural settings. The teachers, as guides of an intercultural classroom must be mediators between the multiple cultures in a classroom. By developing awareness of themselves in contrast to others, exploring multiple cultures, learning to compare and contrast two different cultures, finding values in the beliefs of others and critically analyzing the relationships between people across cultural differences, people develop intercultural competency skills (Byram, 2008).

Figure 1: Intercultural Communicative Competence Model



Source: Adapted from Byram (1997).

Intercultural teachers are those who have gone through the experience of being intercultural learners. They incorporate five *savoirs* (French for knowledges) of intercultural communicative competence in their students' language and culture, as described by Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence. A language learner ideally develops the following knowledge, skills and attitudes. The first component is *savoirs*, or the knowledge about one's self and culture as well as knowledge of the "other" and their culture. The second knowledge is *savoir faire,* or the ability to gain more knowledge and awareness of a new culture. The third is *savoir être,* or the ability to think outside of one's self and harbor a curiosity about others. The fourth is *savoir comprendre,* or the ability to interpret components of another culture and compare and contrast them. The fifth knowledge is *savoir s'engager,* which is the ability to develop a critical consciousness (Byram, 1997). Kramsch (2004) argued that in order to utilize these *savoirs,* teachers should be self-reflective, flexible with methodologies, allow students choices, act as a mediator between the students' needs and desires for language education and act as a mediator between the content they teach and what is on any given test.

The first knowledge, *savoirs,* indicates an awareness of one's own culture as well as another's culture (Byram, 1997). Sociocultural theory, from a constructivist paradigm acknowledges that knowledge is temporary and constructed through one's own social and cultural lens. Therefore, NESTs have constructed knowledge through their specific English speaking lens and their many other identity markers. Acknowledging that their own knowledge has been constructed through their own specific cultural and social lens is part of the process of examining one's worldview and developing intercultural competence (Sehlaoui, 2001). Recognizing that their own worldview is not the only viewpoint is another essential part of the process (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Nostrand, 1991).

Those who successfully navigate an intercultural experience do not neglect their own cultural identity in order to adapt to others, but rather understand their own culture and how they have come to think, act and behave in the way that they do. *Savoirs* requires self-reflection and self-awareness of one's own cultural upbringing and the way that one might be perceived by others (Nieto & Booth, 2010). This awareness then helps individuals understand that people from differing cultural backgrounds think, act and behave based on their cultural upbringing (Duff & Uchida, 1997). Therefore, the differences of opinion, behavior and beliefs are based in years of cultural and social life experiences. *Savoirs* calls a learner to recognize the cultures outside one's own and to be able to see one's self from the perspective of others.

Being a part of various cultures indicates that one has multiple social identities related to those cultures. This means that one's national identity is not fixed, and that this identity converges with additional identities such as language student, daughter, employee or woman, for example. The first language plays a large and important role in a person's identity and sense of self (Ellis, 2013). This knowledge of social identities and the complexities within those identities makes up the *savoirs* component of intercultural competence. Understanding the complexity of cultural identities prevents the intercultural speaker from relying on and promoting harmful stereotypes (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002). Social, cultural and new linguistic identities grow in foreign language education. Learners make a choice to preserve parts of those identities and to develop new aspects of their identities (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2000). In the process of developing intercultural competence, teachers start by reflecting on their own teaching practices and how their classroom is or is not a welcoming space for multiple identities. This developmental process has an impact on teachers' personal and professional identities as teachers confront the possibility that they still have room to grow in their intercultural knowledge, skills

and abilities (Tolosa, Biebricher, East & Howard, 2018). Teachers who reflect on their own positionality and their understanding of multiple dynamic identities are taking the initial steps to intercultural awareness and building intercultural competence.

The next knowledge, *savoir faire* exemplifies the ability to learn more about the other and other cultures (Byram, 1997). Having the knowledge of cultural differences is useful to the intercultural speaker, but using that knowledge appropriately in intercultural contexts is exemplified through *savoir faire* (Agudelo, 2007). Students desire that their English teachers who are foreigners to their country know how to follow general social norms and to show respect (Rao, 2010). Intercultural teachers with *savoir faire* can therefore cross cultural boundaries and move between two or more cultures (Guilherme, 2002; Sercu, 2005) and be a model of a multilingual speaker (Kramsch, 2004). For NESTs, they cultivate their cultural awareness of the host community with positive openness and respectful persistence to learn more about the local cultures and the diverse aspects within those cultures (Snow & Campbell, 2017). They also create new spaces between people of different cultures where pieces of everyone's culture is included and honored (Sercu, 2005). In a classroom with multiple cultural perspectives, there is an opportunity for growth and change as the people from different cultural backgrounds learn from each other by moving through disagreements, misunderstandings and reflections. Kostogriz (2005, as cited in Ryan & Viete, 2009) referred to this opportunity as thirdspace pedagogy, which is similar to Kramsch's (1993) notion of a third space, discussed later in this chapter. It requires that a NEST have the *savoir faire* to reflect on their identities, positionality as a teacher and personal values while they learn from their students. This reflective and dynamic process occurs with students and may lead to teachers adapting activities and assignments so that students' cultures are honored and represented.

NESTs who develop the competence of *savoir faire* approach cross-cultural contexts by placing the cultures in their contexts. They examine the native language and culture and the target language and culture in their particular settings and with the teachers and students in mind. One with *savoir faire* seeks to understand the layers of culture. They also know how to manage misunderstandings and difficult situations that arise from cross-cultural differences by cultivating a space of belonging for all of the people involved. Intercultural encounters involve the intersection of multiple identities, and therefore requires the intercultural teacher's ability to learn about each of those multiple identities to find the common ground that builds understanding (Guilherme, 2002). *Savoir faire* can ease dialectical tensions. Dialectical tensions, or the opposing needs that NESTs and their ELLs bring to the classroom, are common in the TEFL arena. The differing needs of students and teachers must be negotiated for a harmonious class. Kerdchoochuen (2011) proposed some strategies to ease dialectical tensions between NESTs and ELLs, which can also strengthen the relationships between them. When a tension or disagreement arises between NESTs and ELLs, the teacher can mediate the tension by choosing to include some aspects on either side of the disagreement and exclude other aspects until a compromise is reached. They can also choose to honor one side of the disagreement or tension at certain times in the class, and honor or favor the other side of the disagreement at other times in the class. Another strategy is for both opposing groups to redefine and reframe their disagreement in order to settle the tension. Indifference to the disagreement is also a plausible strategy, which NESTs and ELLs often use when they choose to ignore practices or behaviors that cause them tension (Kerdchoochuen, 2011). Understanding and using these strategies of learning more about their ELLs' culture helps a teacher address the intercultural conflicts in the TEFL classroom. However, they must also have the open attitude to use them.

Savoir être is the open attitude embodied by the intercultural person that leads them to decenter themselves from their own perspective and to be curious about other cultures and perspectives (Byram, 1997). This open attitude is exemplified by a willingness to learn more and to reflect on one's own position. It is not the actions or knowledge, but the characteristics and personality traits embodied by an intercultural person (Guilherme, 2002). *Savoir être* is different from *savoir faire* in that it is the attitude and openness needed to act with intercultural competence (Agudelo, 2007). As mentioned previously, decentering requires the intercultural person to find a mediating ground to understand multiple cultures (Si Thang, 2011). The NESTs who are curious about their host community have the *savoir être* needed to build their understanding of the community around them. As they learn more about the host community, they do so with a respectful attitude towards different opinions, beliefs and attitudes (Byram, 2008; Snow & Campbell, 2017). They turn intercultural encounters with others into relationships rather than just superficially visit in cross-cultural spaces. They are not just observers in cross-cultural spaces, but also participants who get to know the cultures of others while sharing aspects of their own (Sercu, 2005). Not all teachers are open to examining their own practices.

Educational administrators and teachers who are resistant to change and expect students to conform to the previously established processes and guidelines do not exhibit the attitudes of an intercultural educator (Ryan & Viete, 2009). Those that expect their students to conform to the dominant culture, practices or norms marginalize the students, their values and their familial practices. Teachers who are open and curious about their students' beliefs, backgrounds, familial practices and cultural values view their students positively and work to build connections to them (Arriaza & Wagner, 2012). Teachers with this *savoir être* are adaptable to change. As a NEST, having *savoir être* by learning more about and adapting to the host community builds an

intercultural competence that helps avoid burnout (Snow & Campbell, 2017). These teachers are also the ones whose open attitudes exemplify intercultural competence as a model for their language learners (Sercu, 2005).

Savoir comprendre allows the intercultural person to interpret the target culture, and compare and contrast between two or more cultures (Byram, 1997). It is necessary for teachers to be familiar with the students' cultures and languages in order to compare and contrast them to the target culture and language. NESTs who are not familiar with their students' native cultures give examples that do not apply to their lives, but instead give examples from their own personal experience. These can be vastly different from the everyday lives of their students (Rao, 2010). Instead, intercultural teachers know how to interpret the target culture as well as the students' native cultures in order to empathize with the point of the view of the other, and model that interpretation for their students. Their teaching materials and assignments should also reflect that understanding (Sercu, 2005) by using culturally appropriate materials and activities that support students' sociocultural identities (Yang, 2018). In a study by Tolosa, Biebricher, East and Howard (2018), one teacher reported that after learning about intercultural language teaching, she thought about culture less in terms of food and festivals, and more in terms of differences in values, common attitudes and beliefs. She developed activities for students to compare and contrast the concepts of time modeled in their native culture versus the target culture. She found that students learned how to tell time in the target language at the same time that they grew in the understanding of cultural norms such as the value of time. Another teacher in the study reported that by stimulating conversations in the classroom about cultural differences and similarities, the teacher avoided the mere transmission of information. He guided cultural understandings and taught students to challenge preconceived ideas about the target culture (Tolosa, Biebricher, East

& Howard, 2018). Both of these teachers shared these positive anecdotes after learning about intercultural language education and developing the *savoir comprendre* to do so.

Finding ways that people from the native culture view the target culture and vice-versa helps the foreign language teacher build necessary cross-cultural understanding in the foreign language classroom (Kramsch, 1993). It is also necessary for NESTs to understand how the country in which they are teaching uses English and why their students want to use English. The NNEST, as an ELL, may have already studied the target culture and compared it to their native culture (Odhuu, 2014; Si Thang, 2011). Yet, the NEST is less likely to be familiar with the students' native languages and cultures and motivation for studying English. Knowing how and why a country uses English as a foreign language or as a primary means of business assists intercultural teachers to understand their students and their motivation to learn English (Odhuu, 2014). This interpretation of cultural demands for English is a component of *savoir comprendre.* Similarly, in a research study about critical approaches to foreign language education in Portugal, teachers shared that they believed the ability to compare and contrast the two cultures leads to an understanding of the other, and ultimately an acceptance of the other (Guilherme, 2002). In addition, the NEST's ability to make connections between the TEFL culture and the local and global sociopolitical contexts is an important part of critical pedagogy (Sehlaoui, 2001) and the next knowledge, *savoir s'engager.*

Savoir s'engager invites the intercultural person to raise their critical awareness of the social, cultural, historical and political background of the context in which they work (Byram, 1997). This critical awareness is supported by Freire's (1999, 2005) call for critical consciousness in education. Critical consciousness requires an ability to read the world. He argued that because humans are relational beings, always called to respond to the world around

them, they must also be critical of their participation in the world (Freire, 2005). As teachers build a critical awareness of the contexts in which they live and work, the knowledge must not be simply of the country and common cultural norms. Critical consciousness requires a development of the skills, attitudes and values that the culture embodies (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002). In this case, NESTs must be aware of the social, cultural, historical and political implications of TEFL on their students (Sehlaoui, 2001). Foreign language teachers must have the intercultural competence to know the historical and political background of English language education in order to assist students to understand their relationship to the language (Pennycook, 2007; Smith, 1999). Teachers should examine the linguistic identities of those in the classroom from a sociocultural lens to assess how those linguistic backgrounds impact the way that each participant enters the classroom (Ellis, 2013). *Savoir s'engager* is connected to critical pedagogy in foreign language education.

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy, which is largely attributed to Paulo Freire (1999), is an approach to education which posits that people must question everything they learn, and that students should not be passive recipients of information from their teachers. In language education, this approach calls teachers to reflect on the role that English plays locally and globally. Critical pedagogues recognize that education in general and language education in particular are political acts, and that critically reflecting on those acts must be a part of one's teaching practice. It calls teachers to also reflect on their relationships with speakers of languages other than English (Pennycook, 1999). Proponents of critical pedagogy also connect what happens in the language classroom, including interactions between teachers and students, to the larger historical, social and political contexts outside the classroom (Smith, 1999). In this literature review, NESTs represent the target language and culture that their students study. The NESTs, as representations of the target

language and culture, must have a critical awareness of the dynamic identities of students and teachers, and the way they interact with one another (Kramsch, 2004).

Applying critical pedagogy to the TEFL field requires a critical analysis of the dominant ideologies that rule within educational settings. Critical approaches to second language education address the pernicious principles that often guide TEFL education such as the use of English-only in the classroom, the idea that a native speaker is the best teacher, that English is best taught at the youngest age possible, and that the use of languages other than English will disrupt English language education (Phillipson, 1992; Tollefson, 2011). These principles guide TEFL classrooms in many parts of the world which negatively affect the teachers and students who participate in them. Additionally, supporting a standard variety of English over the varieties that exist similarly disadvantages stakeholders in the TEFL field. Critical pedagogues challenge such notions and their proliferation (Tollefson, 2011).

These principles are guided and promoted by those in power, and therefore affect the curriculum where the dominant class maintains control over the materials used. However, questioning the narrative found in textbooks, everyday materials and discourse is a critical process to exposing the truths that dominant ideologies hide. Often critical pedagogical approaches to education include a focus on issues of power, community relationships, social movements, and including those who have historically been marginalized. In TEFL classrooms, particularly in Latin America where critical pedagogy was born, this practice reminds teachers and students of students' agency in the world around them and in their English classroom. The issue of students' using their "voice" to increase recognition is a critical pedagogical practice that raises awareness of cultural, historical and identity-based injustices which are often hidden from the everyday curriculum (Luke & Dooley, 2011).

The critical awareness of TEFL history includes the forces of colonialism and coloniality that exist in the TEFL world (Granados-Beltrán, 2016; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996). Coloniality is the current extension of colonialism that exists between certain nations where one holds power over others. While there is a decolonial turn occurring in Latin America, where intellectuals from these nations critique the ideas of modernity that support coloniality, the remnants of colonialism remain in Latin American countries (Granados-Beltrán, 2016; Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007). Coloniality influences students as well as teachers in their everyday behaviors and expectations for their classes. Fears and critiques of accents hold back non-native speakers of the language as accent discrimination persists (Aslan & Thompson, 2017; Solano Campos, 2014). Lantolf and Pavlenko (2000) acknowledge that the individuals who become bilingual are often those with marginalized identities; those needing to immigrate to better their lives or survive. ELLs are often encouraged to change their name to assimilate or make it easier for native English speakers to remember and pronounce their names. Yet, this process of renaming, similar to attempts to "get rid" of one's accent, contributes to the learner's loss of agency (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2000). These are practices that may be encouraged by TEFL teachers.

Teachers who do not consider critical intercultural pedagogy may pay attention to popular strategies and methodologies without addressing the sociopolitical issues that arise among differing identities within the classroom. This can negatively impact their students (Granados-Beltrán, 2016). For example, one widely used method of teaching English as a foreign language is the Communicative Approach in which the teacher creates as many opportunities and class time for the student to be speaking in the target language. This approach was created from a British conceptualization of proper language education. However, this method has not been well received in every country around that world and has been viewed in the context of educational

imperialism. In some contexts and countries, this method created in Britain is viewed as better than local methods, thereby disparaging the native culture's pedagogical practices. This is something that NESTs should take into consideration and examine in various TEFL contexts (Agudelo, 2007).

Costa Rica encourages the use of critical pedagogy in education. While many communities across the globe view English as a key to economic prosperity (Solano Campos, 2012, 2014), critical pedagogues recognize that the wide diffusion of English language education has contributed to many social, cultural, political and economic inequalities (Tollefson, 2000). Sociocultural theorists question what languages and varieties of language have the most power and prestige, and who controls the access to those language varieties (Lems et al., 2017). Such questions are also part of a critical pedagogical approach to language education across the world. Costa Rica's Ministry of Public Education (MEP) maintains that critical pedagogy is necessary for learners to become active participants who produce knowledge rather than simply consume it. For this reason, MEP promotes critical pedagogy in Costa Rican classrooms where teachers and students are in dialogue with one another, collaborate in the classroom, and question their reality (MEP, 2016).

English in Costa Rica

Some of the first English speakers to move to Costa Rica are ancestors of present day Costa Ricans that live in the province of Limón. In the late 1800s workers were brought in from Caribbean islands to develop the railroad and work for the U.S.'s United Fruit Company (Aguilar-Sánchez, 2005). Prior to this migration, Costa Ricans became interested in English because of the business transactions they conducted with England, including the exportation of coffee and minerals (Bonilla Lynch & Rojas Alfaro, 2012). The country's disposition against the Limonese English and preference for British English and U.S. American English varieties has

been demonstrated by the lack of support for native English speakers in Limón and the rising promotion of Standard English taught in schools (Aguilar-Sánchez, 2005). The spread of English to Costa Rica from the Caribbean islands stems historically from the British colonial rule and persists today because of the economic, political and cultural influence the U.S. has in Costa Rica (Solano Campos, 2012). The relationship between the U.S. and Costa Rica is apparent on Costa Rican soil.

Diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Costa Rica were established in 1851 after Costa Rica gained independence. The relationship between the two countries is friendly and built on shared values of democratic freedom, free trade and on records of similar voting practices in international decisions. Costa Rica is therefore a popular destination for U.S. Americans to visit or live. The U.S. State Department estimated that around 100,000 U.S. American citizens live in Costa Rica, and more than a million visit the country each year (U.S. State Department, 2016) some of whom are the NESTs that teach TEFL in private and public schools and language centers (Aguilar-Sánchez, 2005). Some dominating perspectives of the U.S. are noted by the students in Costa Rica. Solano Campos (2014) shared her experience growing up in Costa Rica in the 1980s and 1990s by noting in her elementary school years the marked discourse of praise for U.S. culture, language, literacy and knowledge. In fact, her elementary school was named Escuela Estados Unidos de América, or United States of America School. The school was named after the U.S. in admiration for the country's strength, industry, liberty and wealth of material resources. It was also admired because the U.S. was Costa Rica's ally in times of need and viewed as a place to gain social capital. Speaking English is considered a way to gain that social capital, thus taking English classes is considered an investment in one's self and one's family (Solano Campos, 2014). Costa Rica promotes English education widely.

Foreign language education in Costa Rica is valued as a means to advance the country economically, socially, politically and culturally (Córdoba, Coto, & Ramírez, 2005). Growth in international trade and a rise in English speaking tourists have contributed to the desire to learn English in Costa Rica (Aguilar-Sánchez, 2005; Hernández, 2008; Solano Campos, 2012). English has been the required foreign language in Costa Rican schools since 1824 (Aguilar-Sánchez, 2005), and in 2004, Costa Rica became the only Central American country with an English foreign language program for primary school (Córdoba, Coto, & Ramírez, 2005). This was considered a special subject, similar to art, music and physical education until the 1990s when it turned into a content area class in the primary grades (Solano Campos, 2012). English is the primary foreign language taught by schools under the purview of the Ministry of Public Education (MEP, 2016), a requirement for graduation from some universities, and is becoming a growing necessity for certain jobs (Aguilar-Sánchez, 2005). These requirements have led to a rise in demand for English teachers in elementary and secondary schools, as well as universities (Solano Campos, 2014). The Costa Rican government has responded to this need.

In 2008, the Costa Rican government signed a decree called Multilingual Costa Rica in which the Ministry of Education, in conjunction with other public and private institutions, committed to developing the National Plan of English. The main goal of this plan was to train public school teachers in English language methodology and English proficiency in order to pass on those skills to their students (Córdoba, Rodríguez & Hernández, 2015). Solano Campos (2012) argued that the changes in English methodology and instruction are attributed in part to the use of English in multinational corporations and particularly the international coffee industry. The international business of trade and foreign investments in Costa Rican businesses has led to the rising growth in private language centers that supplement English education in the public

school system (Solano Campos, 2012). Tourism and the business sector are strong influences on English language education in Costa Rica.

The Ministry of Public Education (2016) argued that because English is the second most spoken language in the world and the language most often used to communicate across cultures, the development of English language skills in Costa Rica is essential. Proficiency in English will help Costa Ricans gain the communication skills necessary to speak with tourists in Costa Rica and individuals abroad. MEP also recognizes that knowing English helps citizens gain access to a greater number of resources in technological, humanistic and scientific fields. In fact, MEP has created curricula specific to the study of English for tourism, secretarial management, executive secretaries, conversation, computer science, and accounting (MEP, 2016). Since the 1850s Costa Rica has hired foreign teachers, as well as native Costa Ricans who have spent time abroad to teach English in order to fulfill this growing desire for English education (Córdoba, Coto, & Ramírez, 2005). This is similar to the demand for English across the globe.

Worldwide, 80% of TEFL teachers are non-native speakers of English (Canagarajah, 2005). The rest are NESTs who are sought out to teach the language from a native speaker perspective, with the hope of meeting the needs of the growing number of ELLs (Bonilla Lynch & Rojas Alfaro, 2012; Córdoba González, 2011). These teachers are at times recruited without a degree in education, or teaching experience, but solely on the basis of being a native English speaker (Han, 2005; Solano Campos, 2014). These foreign TEFL teachers, especially those from countries where English is the dominant language, may introduce contrasting beliefs, values and attitudes into the classroom due to their differing cultural backgrounds (Phillipson, 2009). In some TEFL teacher education programs, instructors are not prepared to develop intercultural competence or communicative competence. In such programs the focus instead is placed on the

teacher's role as a technician without consideration for teacher or student identities (Sehlaoui, 2001). A critical pedagogy approach is necessary to develop teachers that can connect the practice of TEFL to its sociopolitical, global and cultural implications (Sehlaoui, 2001; Solano Campos, 2012). Intercultural teachers challenge the notion that each nation has one language and one culture (Sercu, 2005). While many Costa Rican ELLs may be native Spanish speakers, NESTs must consider that Costa Rica is comprised of multiple languages and cultures, and they must be adaptive to students' needs.

Culture and Language

Si Thang's (2011) review of the literature on culture found over 200 definitions of culture, some of which are highlighted here. Culture consists of people's "relationships, behaviors, traditions, worldviews and developmental goals and processes" (Brown, 2010, p. 190). It does not just shape humans' development; Brown (2010) argued that human development is a cultural process strengthened through societal relationships. Stuart Hall (1997) argued that culture involves shared meanings, and that language is the manner through which those meanings are shared, understood and reproduced. Therefore, those with similar cultural backgrounds may view the world from a similar standpoint. Though he did not make the metaphor of culture as an iceberg, Edward T. Hall (1987) described culture as having visible and invisible components, thus inspiring the iceberg theory of culture (Katan, 2014). In this theory, culture is viewed by an image of an iceberg partially submerged in water and partially emerging from the water. Some conceptualizations of culture are more visible to society and thus are labeled above the surface level of the water. For example, dress, food, music and language shared by a group of people are more easily perceived. The invisible components of culture that lie below the surface are less obvious and can include perceptions of time and space, values, thought patterns, (Si Thang, 2011) or automatic responses and unconscious actions or behaviors

(Nieto & Booth, 2010). All of these components of culture are learned through social interactions.

Kumaravadivelu (2008) argued that culture is represented by Culture with a big "C," and culture with a little "c." Culture with a big "C" is exemplified by architecture, dance, theatre and other genres of art, and culture with a little "c" is exemplified by concepts such as beliefs, morals, norms and values. This is similar to the iceberg metaphor of culture. In the iceberg metaphor of culture, the aspects of culture that are more visible appear above the surface of the water such as architecture, dance, theatre, etc. while the less visible aspects of culture appear below the surface, such as beliefs, morals, norms and values (Katan, 2014). However, he also added that there is often little agreement on one definition of culture. From an anthropological perspective, Geertz (1973) attested that culture is fundamentally the meanings made through symbols and signs that humans encounter and is expressed through signs such as language and gestures. He argued that culture is found in the symbolism of social actions such as "art, religion, ideology, science, law, morality, and common sense" (Geertz, 1973, p. 30). Hofstede's (2011) definition of culture is a shared meaning among a group of people. He emphasised that while culture is often thought of in terms of a given tribe, nation or ethnic group, it also applies to collective groups such as genders, social classes, generations and occupational groups (Hofstede, 2011). Therefore, people's cultural groups include those they experienced since birth, as well as those they encounter later in life.

Hofstede's (2011) conception of culture has been influential in cross-cultural communications and international business management, and was summarized through six dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, long term versus short term orientation, indulgence versus

restraint. Each of these dimensions are indications of a continuum of that particular component of culture. Cultural groups (nations, social groups, occupational settings, etc.) may demonstrate each of these dimensions at one end of the spectrum or other (Hofstede, 2011). They are outlined by their differences.

Power distance refers to the way that a group or organization distributes power among its members and the hierarchy within. Some groups share power while other groups maintain strict levels of power and authority over others. Uncertainty avoidance refers to a group's attitude toward living with uncertainty and ambiguity, and may be manifested in the amount of rules, regulations and need for absolute truth that govern that group. Individualism versus collectivism is the continuum on which a group favors its members to care for oneself versus the entire group, and the value that is placed on relationships versus personal progress. The masculinity versus femininity dimension is made manifest in traditionally conceptualized feminine or masculine values that direct a society such as caring for all, presence of women in positions of power and equal distribution of parental roles (feminine) or preference for the people who are strong, mostly male presence in positions of power and differentiated parental roles for males and females (masculine). Long term versus short term orientation refers to the manner in which a cultural group values concepts such as perseverance, adaptation and importance of present events or future events. Some of the differences are marked by nationalism, guidelines of good and evil and traditions (short term) versus learning from other countries, circumstantial ideals of good and evil, and changes to traditions (long term). Finally, indulgence versus restraint is marked by the way a group views happiness and gratification. The manifestation of this dimension on opposite poles are perceptions of life control, importance of leisure and fulfilling happiness, (indulgence) versus regulations of social life, indifference to leisure and lack of concern for freedom

(restraint) (Hofstede, 2011). While these dimensions can be applied to and look differently between two people in the same cultural group, Hofstede outlined them as a way to view a group of people who shared the same cultural associations. They can apply to a group of people from the same country or region and/or to those who share the identity of a teacher or student.

Rogoff (2003) argued that people's cultural background shapes the language and tools they use to communicate and interact with others. These different cultural backgrounds indicate that individuals construct reality in their own sociocultural settings and have different perspectives and learned behaviors towards those realities. This is why there are vast differences among human behaviors and norms across the world (Rogoff, 2003). Hall (1997) also affirmed that people of similar cultural backgrounds make meaning of their world in similar ways. However, culture is multifaceted, dynamic and varied within a cultural group. People who share cultural backgrounds may make meaning differently from a given object or subject. Similar to Rogoff's (2003) argument that culture shapes the language and ways of communicating with others, Hall (1997) focused on the way that culture is reproduced and communicated in various symbols, words, expressions and gestures that incorporate the head and the heart. Language is an integral component of culture that allows people to apply words to the meanings they share and wish to express. People also demonstrate their cultural background and development as they express themselves non-verbally (Hall, 1997). Thus language is not just the words that people speak, but all manners in which they communicate.

The relationship between culture and language is reciprocal and interdependent. One cannot be considered without the other (Si Thang, 2011). Foreign language classes cannot separate culture from what is being taught. Language and culture are not static information, but are taught explicitly and tacitly. Foreign language teachers are therefore expected to be the

experts in the target language and cultures, and this is a great responsibility (Kramsch, 2004). Because humans interact with their head and their heart across cultures, it is necessary to address how those intercultural communications and encounters affect teachers and students in the foreign language classroom.

Intercultural Competence

Similar to the multiple definitions of culture, there are many definitions of intercultural competence, as it is defined and explored in various fields (e.g. social work, engineering, etc.) and many similar terms associated with it (Deardorff, 2011). In the foreign language context, Byram differentiates between intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence by arguing that intercultural competence is the process of learning to act appropriately across cultural differences in one's own language, while intercultural communicative competence is the process of learning the linguistic skills to interact in an additional language in a manner that respects the values, beliefs and attitudes of others (Yang, 2018). The concept of intercultural competence is closely connected to terms such as intercultural sensitivity (Deardorff, 2015), intercultural awareness and critical consciousness. Hammer, Bennet, and Wiseman (2003) differentiated intercultural sensitivity from intercultural competence by arguing that intercultural sensitivity is "the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences," while intercultural competence is "the ability to think and act in interculturally appropriate ways" (p. 422). Thus, intercultural sensitivity can lead to a development of intercultural competence as it allows a person to be more open to difference and to differentiated interests, values and needs (Hammer, Bennet, & Wiseman, 2003). Intercultural awareness is similar to intercultural sensitivity in that intercultural awareness is the knowledge and understanding of the similarities and differences between the native language and culture and the target language and culture (Council of Europe, 2014). Additionally, the term critical

consciousness is Freire's (1999, 2005) notion of being cognizant to the social, political and economic disparities among groups of people, and working against the injustices that create those disparities. Having critical consciousness involves using cultural sensitivity and cultural awareness to be not only aware of differences, but to find the injustices between cultural groups. These concepts all apply in various ways to the developmental process of intercultural competence discussed here for both language learners and teachers.

The lifelong process of building intercultural competence does not mean that one reaches an ultimate level of competence, but is always on a developmental journey (Deardorff, 2015). The objective of foreign language education is no longer simply the mastery of linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic skills, but also intercultural communicative competence (Sercu, 2005). Intercultural communicative competence requires the ability to not only effectively communicate with people from different cultures using proper verbal skills, but also learning the communicative role of nonverbal communication skills such as facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, as well as personal space. One who works for intercultural competence in cross cultural situations may not necessarily be fluent in another language, but one who builds intercultural communicative competence strives to build fluency in an additional language and to understand the many ways to express themselves in an additional culture. A TEFL teacher who uses the appropriate voice volume, rate of speech, facial expressions and gestures utilize intercultural communicative competence in order to engage their ELLs (Yang, 2018). These practices build their own intercultural communicative competence in order to be a part of the intercultural community.

To encourage students' participation in an international and intercultural community, Costa Rica's Ministry of Public Education (MEP) (2016) promotes the application of a critical

pedagogy in the language classroom. But for NESTs to critically cultivate intercultural competence, they must have experience developing intercultural competence and being part of such an intercultural community (García Benito, 2009; Tolosa, Biebricher, East & Howard, 2018). In the past, the promotion of cultural awareness was based on the notion of "one nation, one culture, one language" (Sercu, 2005, p. 115). However, foreign language education includes multiple cultures and many language varieties, even in the same country such as Costa Rica. For this reason, TEFL teachers build intercultural competence as well as intercultural communicative competence.

The foreign language classroom is an intercultural space with at least two cultures and languages (Sehlaoui, 2001) in which intercultural communicative competence is nourished (Yang, 2018). In a TEFL classroom, the students' target language and culture are those of the NEST. Intercultural language learning is a developmental process where learners understand the connection between their own language and culture to additional languages and cultures (García Benito, 2009; Si Thang, 2011). In the foreign language classroom, developing intercultural competence is not just a process for learners. It is an unending journey in which teachers must also partake. Gaining the knowledge, skills and having the attitudes to appropriately engage in intercultural situations applies to the foreign language teacher, who is the model for the target language and culture (Kramsch, 2004). This knowledge together with the attitude and skills are also necessary because conflicts can arise between teachers and students from different cultures (Nieto & Booth, 2010). It is the teacher's responsibility to tackle such conflicts.

While NESTs are sometimes touted as the preferred instructor for TEFL classrooms, they may not necessarily be interculturally competent. The TEFL teacher must encompass more than just being a native speaker with a bachelor's degree (Snow & Campbell, 2017). In a study of

TEFL teachers and ELLs in Vietnam, Si Thang (2011) found that non-native language teachers may be better inclined to be intercultural teachers if they have already gained proficiency in another language and culture. NESTs who choose to develop linguistic skills in the language of the host community are able to communicate directly with them (Snow & Campbell, 2017) and can also build intercultural communicative competence. As they learn the language and culture of their students, NESTs may grow in Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence that focuses on five savoirs. As previously noted, savoir être is the open attitude that allows intercultural speakers to decenter themselves and understand that their way of thinking is not the only way of thinking (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002). In the process of decentering, an intercultural learner finds a negotiated space in which they can interact with those from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds to find common ground between them (Si Thang, 2011). The NESTs who build intercultural competence know that there is not one way of teaching or learning a second language, nor think that their preferred method is the best way to teach (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Pennycook, 1999).

Savoirs includes knowledge about others, and insights into the way that one might be perceived by others (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002). Intercultural teachers are aware that they cannot possibly know everything about the cultural beliefs and practices of their students, but are open to learning more about their students' languages and cultures. Knowing more about their students' culture does not require that they be a cultural expert of any one particular culture, but a mediator who can instill in their students the awarenesses, knowledge and skills needed to be intercultural speakers themselves (Kramsch, 2004). Savoir faire is the ability to continue learning about a new community and culture. Savoir comprendre is the ability to interpret and relate an event, document or activity from another culture and relate it to one's own (Byram,

Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002). For teachers to be successful intercultural language teachers, they must make a concerted effort to tap into their ability to empathize, find respect for diversity, see the world from the perspective of others, and to be sensitive and tolerant of cultural differences (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Savoir s'engager is the ability to view one's own culture and another's culture with a critical lens. The role of the language teacher is not only to cultivate such attitudes, knowledges and skills in their students, but to also embody and develop them in themselves (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002).

In Costa Rica, NESTs are called to take a critical approach to their TEFL classroom (MEP, 2016; Solano Campos, 2012) by extending the practices of language teaching, planning, and policy to the social and political contexts of stakeholders' lives. The ability to speak English in Costa Rica, as in many parts of the world, is connected to the distribution of wealth (Solano Campos, 2012). A critical intercultural approach to TEFL is therefore needed for non-native speakers of English, as well as native speakers. The non-native English speakers must reflect on ideologies and practices that reinforce internalized inferiority, and native speakers must reflect on the internalized dominance they embody as native speakers of English (Granados-Beltrán, 2016). NESTs have a unique role in this spread of English.

Teachers' pedagogical principles are linked to the way that they view themselves, as well as the social, cultural, political and economic environment in which they developed. This is why it is necessary for teachers to be self-reflective on their identities and teaching practices. Granados-Beltrán (2016) argued that the idea behind decolonial pedagogy is to question and disrupt the remnants of coloniality that maintain inequality between language speakers and between former colonies and countries of power. A critical intercultural approach to the TEFL classroom invites different voices, respect for personal experience, and the positive

transformation of both teachers and students (Granados-Beltrán, 2016). One must learn that their way of life and viewing the world is not the only way or best way to do so (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). For NESTs, learning about the cultural norms and languages of their students shows that there are many ways of viewing the world.

Teachers Learning Students' First Language

An important aspect of being interculturally competent involves speaking more than one language (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Yang, 2018). The interculturally competent foreign language teacher must be able to use the target language as both a native and non-native speaker would, which is why it is necessary to see the target language from the perspective of the students' native language (Kramsch, 2004). As one learns additional languages, their beliefs, perspectives, and identities shift and are recreated through the language learning process (Duff & Uchida, 1997). Learning another language can force the learner to reflect on their own culture, language, and assumptions about communication (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2009). In the process of learning another language, they also learn a new system of making meaning and a new structure from which to view the world (Agudelo, 2007; Nostrand, 1991). Going through the language acquisition process also helps one see the "other" as both a contrast and a complement to themselves (Duff & Uchida, 1997).

TEFL teachers who build intercultural competence make the concerted effort to connect their students' native language to English (Nieto & Booth, 2010). Using the students' first language to connect to English requires a certain level of proficiency in that language (Macaro & Lee, 2013). As NESTs go through the language learning process themselves, they are able to see that becoming competent in a foreign language is a more attainable goal than gaining native-like fluency and pronunciation in an additional language (Ellis, 2013). Additionally, the global spread of English has led to an establishment of certain unattainable norms regarding native fluency and

pronunciation that "others" non-standard varieties of English and ELLs. Letting go of the need or desire to achieve native-like fluency in a foreign language supports non-standard varieties of English that push against Standard English ideologies and colonial dominance (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007). This awareness of Standard English ideologies and experience as language learners themselves can help NESTs understand their ELLs and relate to the difficulties of the language learning process.

Teachers' experiences of learning students' first language.

Language teachers who strive to be bilingual or plurilingual benefit their students. Ellis (2013) asserted that some teacher education programs include courses called *structured language learning experiences* (SLLE). The SLLE is structured time for teachers to learn a language, an experience that serves to increase their ability to empathize with their students, and to understand the language learning process from the perspective of the student. During this language learning experience, teachers benefit by spending time in another culture for an extended period and by viewing new, unfamiliar teaching styles. As they spend time in an educational setting of a different culture, NESTs experience methods and strategies of teaching that might not have been used in their own cultural upbringing, and can understand what it is like to be a language learner (Ellis, 2013). Also, the practice of ongoing language learning makes the practice of being a student relevant to the NEST.

Casanave (2012) investigated the language learning and intercultural process in a self-reflective study by keeping and analyzing years of journal entries. She found through personal and external research that TEFL educators who continue to learn language(s) benefit from the experience. Casanave worked at a Japanese university, and her motivation to learn Japanese was based on the desire to build relationships with neighbors, students and teachers. She learned from what she referred to as "local informants" the necessary phrases that would help her in everyday

life. She learned informally, paying attention to Japanese every day in bits and pieces (Casanave, 2012). This practice helped her examine the language learning process from the perspective of a student.

Being a student of an additional language helps the teacher see what makes learning a language difficult. Casanave (2012) discovered that maintaining interest in the language one studies is necessary for continued engagement with the language. Having fun is an essential part of the language learning experience. A language learner should be cognizant of how external factors (e.g. weather, sufficient rest, health etc.) help or hinder the language learning process. She found it frustrating when speaking with native Japanese speakers who would not slow their speech in order to meet her level of Japanese. It was also frustrating when speaking to a plurilingual Japanese speaker who would revert to English, instead of slowing down their rate of speech when she misunderstood a phrase. These moments discouraged her from practicing. They also helped shape her teaching practice in the TEFL classroom. She realized that she could consider how these aspects or behaviors might similarly affect her students' language learning experience and motivation (Casanave, 2012).

Snow and Campbell (2017) argued that NESTs can enrich their own lives by learning the language of the host community, as well as provide them with a glimpse of their students' experience as language learners. They argued that students are more likely to work hard when their teacher understands them and can identify with them. For example, as teachers learn a new language, they must learn to manage the fears and anxieties that come with learning a language. They have to work through the emotions that arise, such as frustrations, stress, shame and worry. By going through the emotional roller coaster of language learning, they can relate to students as they learn to manage their emotions while learning English.

Ellis (2013) interviewed plurilingual and monolingual teachers regarding their language learning experience. She found that the monolingual teachers reported fear and embarrassment over failures in language learning. Some expressed dismay at their inability to become plurilingual. While the monolinguals who had attempted to learn languages could empathize with their students in the difficult aspects of learning a language, they were unable to share successful stories and strategies with their students (Ellis, 2013). Participants in another study reported that NNESTs have advantages as teachers because they have already proven that they can move between cultures and encourage the students to get excited about learning the second language. They know the explanations for grammar in both languages and can relate first-hand to the struggle of learning English specifically (Si Thang, 2011). More empirical studies discussed below show similar findings from the perspective of ELLs around the world.

First language use in the classroom; language transfer and cross-linguistic influence. As NESTs learn a new language, they begin to understand how their first language influences their acquisition of an additional language. It is an important resource that can help one acquire an additional language (Abad, 2013; Ellis, 2013). As NESTs learn their students' language, they begin to understand how the first language assists or interferes with learning another language. The language classroom is a space to investigate how a first language supports or impedes the language learning process. Many TEFL teachers are discouraged from using the first language in the classroom (Macaro & Lee, 2013) and prohibit students from using it (Moore, 2013).

One reason many TEFL classrooms disallow the use of the first language is due to the belief in the *time-on-task* or *maximum exposure hypothesis*. These notions support the idea that greatest possible exposure to English with little to no interference of the first language leads to proficiency in the language (Soltero, 2011). Doiz and Lasagabaster (2017), found that many

TEFL teachers believe that immersing students in English is the best way to advance quickly and that use of the second language may slow down student learning. These teachers argued that they tried to create an immersion-style classroom where students were surrounded only by English during their class periods, and that students could make an effort to use English even if they made mistakes. Some teachers allowed occasional use of the first language in their English classes. However, too much use of the first language can hinder target language learning when it becomes excessive rather than supportive (Lasagabaster, 2013).

Many scholars, TEFL teachers and students agree that while the first language should not be used extensively in the classroom, it can be beneficial in moderate use (Childs, 2016; Lems et al., 2017; Macaro & Lee, 2013; Moore 2013; Şener & Korkut, 2017). Some of the main educational functions for using the first language in the classroom include providing instructions, managing behavior (Macaro & Lee, 2013), reducing anxieties of students, keeping students engaged, expressing abstract concepts and connecting the first language to the target language (Şener & Korkut, 2017). Students reported feeling discouraged from learning English when they could not express themselves to their teacher in their native language or ask clarifying questions. If they did not know how to do an activity or assignment and could not ask for help, they would fall behind (Macaro & Lee, 2013).

To prevent students from falling behind or getting discouraged, teachers scaffold their learning. Scaffolding is a pedagogical method where a teacher or competent peer structures learning for a student in order to build on their current knowledge. This method allows the professors to mediate student learning by working within their ZPD. This sociocultural activity helps students grasp new words and phrases in their target language by not introducing them to structures that are too difficult. Using students' first language to grasp concepts in the target

language is a way of scaffolding that is particularly helpful to beginner learners (Lantolf, 2002). Moore (2013) argued that when teachers and peers scaffold in the foreign language classroom, using the first language through student collaboration is appropriate to develop the target language. Beginner students may use their first language to talk about their learning and understand their learning. As they become more advanced, they might use their target language to understand their learning and build skills (Lantoff, 2002). If teachers can speak the students' first language, it is helpful for them to use the first language to give instructions and advice (Halasa & Al-Manaseer, 2012). Additionally, when teachers give students words of approval or encouragement in their first language, it deepens their understanding of their praise and/or improvement, and therefore makes them feel such praise (Cook, 2001). Quick explanations, instructions, accolades and definitions from teachers may help all levels of ELLs.

A teacher can often quickly and more efficiently explain new vocabulary using the students' first language. Beginner level ELLs understand new vocabulary in the target language by connecting it to their first language. They often start the language learning process by directly translating new words to the words they have in their first language. As they become more proficient, they rely less on the direct translation and can develop concepts in their target language. Therefore, having a teacher who is proficient in their first language can be helpful for the beginner level ELLs. Additionally, first language use in the classroom saves time and prevents confusion when teachers give instructions in the first language. They may quickly set up an activity and answer clarifying questions in the students' first language, thereby ensuring the students understand the instructions and letting the students practice the activity (Macaro & Lee, 2013). Without knowledge of their students' first language, the NEST would not be as likely to make such connections across the languages, nor with students (Cook, 2001; Han,

2005). Also, teachers are more likely than peer students to understand how to provide new information within students' ZPD (Lantolf, 2002).

The first language influences a learner's ability to acquire and develop a language. Cross-linguistic influence is the conscious and unconscious use of the first language when developing a new language (Lems et al., 2017). Cummins (1979) argued that a higher proficiency in one's first language assists in the acquisition of a second language. Individuals use their first language when they attempt to learn a second or additional language in a process called cross-linguistic influence (Soltero, 2011). Marian and Kaushanskaya (2006) identify language transfer as the use of semantic or syntactic structures of the first language when writing or speaking in the second language. When students attempt to translate their first language to their target language, they may use the target language incorrectly, because of semantic and syntactic differences (Marian & Kaushanskaya, 2006). The transference of linguistic skills is not always negative; it can be positive, negative or neutral (Soltero, 2011).

An example of positive influence between English and Spanish is that the two languages have many similar grammar structures and the same alphabet, except for the Spanish letter "ñ" (Lems et al., 2017). They also have many cognates such as favor/favor and nation/nación. An example of negative influence is the different pronunciation of certain letters, especially in cognates like hotel/hotel. In Spanish, the *h* in "hotel" is silent. An example of neutral influence from Spanish to English is the use of gendered nouns. Spanish speakers learning English do not have to learn the gender of nouns since they do not exist (Soltero, 2011). It is important that teachers know these potential positive, negative and neutral influences on the language learning process for their students, in order to prevent pitfalls and show similarities.

Speakers who have phonological awareness and proficiency in Spanish, for example, will be better positioned to use those linguistic skills to their target language, such as English. Phonological awareness refers to the ability to identify and use parts of speech such as syllables and phonemes. Therefore, it is important for teachers to have phonological and semantic awareness in both the first and target languages in order to develop strategies for transferring such linguistic skills (Cárdenas-Hagan, Carlson, & Pollard-Durodola, 2007). Metalinguistic awareness is the ability to think about the forms and features of a language separated from the meaning behind the words. This process aids foreign language learning as it helps the student learn about the language as they study it (Lems et al., 2017). Knowing how the two languages differ and are similar can equip teachers with strategies to pass on to their students. Taking the time to build awareness of linguistic development and the ways in which students perceive the world in their multiple languages, helps strengthen tolerance for language varieties and the language learning process (García, 2009).

The contrastive analysis hypothesis became known in the 1950s and 60s by linguists who studied similar structures and attributes between two languages. They argued that by contrasting two different languages, teachers and students find that some languages share similar features that help learners build linguistic skills in the new language, and other features that make learning more difficult. Contrastive analysis is no longer a widely accepted method of teaching a foreign language because the knowledge of certain similarities between languages cannot predict when language learners will have issues (Lems et al., 2017). However, using aspects of contrastive analysis such as comparing and contrasting can explain how the first language and additional language may interact with one another. Understanding which aspects of the first language transfer to the target language help ELLs speak correctly (Soltero, 2011). Foreign

language educators should be able to make connections between the two languages to assist students in comparing and contrasting vocabulary, structures and discourse patterns (Lems et al., 2017).

Cross-linguistic influence also includes an intermingling of the two languages in what is called translanguaging. Translanguaging is the "set of discursive practices we employ in order to communicate in multilingual contexts" (Palmer, Martínez, Mateus & Henderson, 2014, p.758). When people translanguage, they utilize all of the languages they speak to make meaning, rather than separating languages (Childs, 2016). This can include writing in one language and reading in another, or using multiple languages in the same speech act or sentence (García, 2009). There are advantages and disadvantages to translanguaging. Some scholars have viewed the use of translanguaging in the classroom as problematic, because they view the first language as a threat to the development of the target language (Childs, 2016). Also, many teachers fear that using the first language in the foreign language classroom will confuse students (Mwinda & Van der Walt, 2015; Norman, 2012). However, these beliefs stem from a monolingual perspective of language learning. While language is sometimes viewed as a bounded system, some scholars see it as a set of practices rather than a fixed system. Seeing languages as practices challenges the notion that learning an additional language means gaining a separate linguistic system, but that the multilingual practices come together and are used in different contexts (Palmer, Martínez, Mateus, & Henderson, 2014). Translanguaging is a common practice outside the language classroom in multilingual communities and environments (García, 2009), which helps students build metalinguistic awareness and develop their target language through the skills they have in their first language (Mwinda & Van der Walt, 2015).Therefore, encouraging translanguaging in the classroom is a way to encourage students to behave appropriately in multilingual contexts.

Part of translanguaging includes code-switching, or using both the first and target language in the same utterance. While it is often viewed negatively, code-switching is a skilled practice that is normal for a person who speaks multiple languages (Palmer, Martínez, Mateus & Henderson, 2014). Switching to the students' first language helps teachers of ELLs regain the attention of the students who get distracted, give a reprimand and redirect them. More positively, the use of code-switching encourages ELLs to move back and forth between languages and therefore, gain confidence in the target language (Cook, 2001). Instances of translanguaging and transfer are natural practices of the bilingual and foreign language learning process. It is helpful for teachers of the target language to know specifically how vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and semiotics from the first language can impact the target language (Lems et al., 2017; Marian & Kaushanskaya, 2006). Using the students' first language can also foster positive relational connections between teachers and students, and motivate students (Childs, 2016; Şener & Korkut, 2017). Knowing how to communicate verbally as well as nonverbally in the students' language conveys that teachers understand their students and builds bonds between them (Yang, 2018). These practices should be celebrated, not denigrated.

Students' perceptions of monolingual NESTs.

Several studies have illustrated ELL's opinions regarding the linguistic skills and intercultural competence of their TEFL teachers, including the differences between NESTs and NNESTs (Aslan & Thompson, 2017; Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Chun, 2014; Han, 2005; Macaro & Lee, 2013; Rao, 2010). The native speaker fallacy disputes the notion that a native speaker of a language is automatically a better teacher than a non-native speaker (Phillipson, 1992). However, in a 2013 analysis of TEFL advertisements, 79% of schools and organizations prefer or require a NEST. However, the hiring managers are further discriminating and have even shown preference to NESTs from the U.S. (Aslan & Thompson, 2017). Researchers who study ELL perspectives

on NESTs and NNESTs as teachers (Aslan & Thompson, 2017; Chun, 2014; Han, 2005; Rao, 2010) reported advantages and disadvantages to having a NEST as an instructor, including the linguistic skills of the NEST in their students' native language. While NESTs serve as a model for pronunciation and a resource for many cultural norms in the target culture, they at times fall short as teachers (Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Han, 2005; Macaro & Lee, 2013). Studies by Rao (2010) and Chun (2014) showed that many students who participated in the study believed that their monolingual NESTs were insensitive to the language learning experience, because the teachers could not connect the students' native language to the target language (English). On the other hand, the NNESTs could explain the grammar and syntax of English through the students' native language and highlight linguistic similarities and differences (Macaro & Lee; 2013; Rao, 2010). In some contexts, students preferred the NNESTs because they could empathize with being an ELL (Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Chun, 2014; Han, 2005; Rao, 2010).

Another study of ELLs in Korea explored additional advantages and disadvantages of having a NEST (Han, 2005). Some of the students that participated in the study reported that NESTs provided authentic examples of the English language and culture, were examples of target pronunciation, and taught the acceptable ways of negotiating and thinking in English. However, one of the reported disadvantages of having a monolingual NEST was their lack of knowledge in Korean language and culture. Additionally, many NESTs came off as cold and disconnected because few developed personal relationships with students. Barratt and Kontra's (2000) exploration into students' perceptions of monolingual NESTs showed that the NNEST could relate the Chinese language to the English language and were well versed in the national and district standards students needed to pass high stakes English assessments. The level of superiority that NESTs often demonstrated over local culture, citizens and even students, was

another disadvantage attributed to NESTs. Students argued that some NESTs ignored the local cultural expectations and looked down upon the host community (Barratt & Kontra, 2000).

In a study in Costa Rica (Villalobos Ulate, 2014), administrators, teachers and students of seven different language schools were surveyed to gather their perceptions of native vs non-native speaking teachers of foreign languages. Of the administrators surveyed, 57% felt that having a native speaking teacher was very necessary to language instruction. In agreement with this position were 48% of teachers and 43% of students. Of the students interviewed, only 62% preferred having a native speaking teacher to a non-native speaking teacher, even though some students argued that a non-native speaking teacher was preferable for beginner level classes and grammar classes (Villalobos Ulate, 2014). The native speaker fallacy (Phillipson, 1992) seems to survive in some Costa Rican language centers as many administrators, teachers and students showed their belief that a native speaker may be preferable to teach English (Villalobos Ulate, 2014). However, as some of the previous studies concluded, NESTs can relate to their students by being language learners themselves (Chun, 2014; Rao, 2010). Additionally, the process of learning a language helps the NEST become more aware of local cultural norms, which can increase their likelihood of connecting to students in the classroom (Chun, 2016; Han, 2005; Rao, 2010). Learning about their students' native language can help NESTs predict where their students may make mistakes and allow them to show differences and commonalities between the languages (Barratt & Kontra, 2000). It may also increase the opportunities to interact with the students.

Building Teacher-Student Relationships

Students may be more motivated to learn an additional language when they have positive interactions with speakers of the language (Cummins, 1979). Learner motivation and meaningful interactions are essential components of learning a second language (Schwarzer, 2009). In the

language classroom, one cannot separate the people involved from the practice of education. Education can be deeply relational (Farrell, 2014). Japanese educator Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1936, as cited in Goulah, 2015) likened the role of a teacher to one who cares for chrysanthemums, as a way to illuminate the difficult role teachers possess to learn about their students and carefully encourage their growth. They must have the proper attitude and mental strength to serve their students holistically (Goulah, 2015). Daisaku Ikeda, a disciple of Makiguchi, also supported the belief that a teacher has a strong influence in the development of a student. Ikeda (2010) asserted that teachers, not the lectures or materials, were the ones who had the greatest impact on the lives of the students. Similar to Makiguchi, Ikeda believed that teachers should humble themselves and act as servants towards their students. They should be guides for students in the language learning process by engaging in meaningful human interactions with them (Ikeda, 2010). Developing such relationships can depend on the context and the students themselves.

Teachers who invest in the emotional and relational practices of listening to their students, may assess their feelings, demeanor and motivation towards learning (Farrell, 2014). Casanave (2012) argued that one's motivation for learning can rise and fall with internal and external factors of life. By listening to students and their concerns, showing care for them and giving them advice, teachers are further able to assist in students' learning. While relationship building can be emotionally draining (Farrell, 2014), it is important to see students as relational humans and not just recipients of knowledge. In this way, teachers act not just as technicians in their role, but also as guides to their students (Casanave, 2012). Some students may have fears and anxieties around learning a language. As teachers become closer to their students, they can also learn to address students' fears and anxieties, in order to increase their ability to be open to

new information and skills (Farrell, 2014). In addition, students may have different reasons for studying English. Making the material relevant to their specific interests and linguistic needs may call teachers to present the material in different formats that fit the context for which students need to become proficient (Odhuu, 2014).

Understanding students' motivation for studying English is critical to their persistence in learning (Schwarzer, 2009). Students may learn English for internal factors such as personal desire, or external factors such as economic need (Abrar-ul-Hassan, 2009). Students' reasons for studying English as a second language and their motivation to keep pursuing it are varied across countries and cultures, as well as in the same classroom. One student may dislike English and have negative feelings towards Western cultures, but need to learn it to get a better job. Another student may love English and just want to learn it for fun. Another student may need to learn English to work or study in an English speaking country (Snow & Campbell, 2017). Some students are motivated to learn English because of their goal to gain a global identity, while others learn English because of pressure from parents and the global imposition of English (Tragant, 2006). These motivations are connected to their expectations of their TEFL teachers. Understanding these reasons, expectations and needs to study the language helps teachers create lessons and assignments to promote student learning (Schwarzer, 2009; Snow & Campbell, 2017). Strategies to further motivate students to learn English can be found in teacher-student relationships. Teachers can motivate their students by learning what makes them feel safe, honoring them on their birthdays or praising them for their achievements in and outside the classroom. If they know what students enjoy doing or talking about in the classroom, they can design lessons in fun and interesting ways (Abrar-ul-Hassan, 2009). This requires that the teachers learn to connect with students to build positive relationships.

Having relationships with students does not necessarily mean that teachers meet with them outside of the classroom. There are many opportunities for teachers to connect with students over video-conference, email or through class projects (Savignon, 2004). Not all students appreciate group projects, but may reveal personal information through self-descriptive projects. Students can reveal a lot about themselves in their projects and writing assignments; demonstrating their needs and desires. If they are open to it, writing assignments provide opportunities for students to share more about themselves, their values, beliefs and how their culture shapes those values and beliefs (Schwarzer, 2009). These assignments reveal a lot about students.

As they get to know each of their students, teachers can better understand their behavior and motivations (Henry & Thorsen, 2018), identify their reasons for studying English, and expectations of their teacher (Han, 2005; Snow & Campbell, 2017). NESTs who understand what students expect from their teachers and what they value can improve their teaching practice. Some students look to form relationships with their NESTs. They look for warm, trusting friendships in the hopes that teachers understand their perspective and experience learning English (Han, 2005). Some students expect their teacher to be a sage that shares the necessary information to pass a certain exam. In other situations teachers are expected to motivate students through fun activities. In every TEFL context, a teacher must balance their role and identity with their students' expectations (Snow & Campbell, 2017). Teachers' integrity and ability to develop appropriate relationships with their students are greater determinants of their success than simply their methodology or classroom instruction (Si Thang, 2011). While teacher-student relationships are important to the learning experience, teachers have different ideas of

what those relationships may look like and how to negotiate them (Farrell, 2014). The acceptable teacher-student relationship varies depending upon cultural norms.

For a NEST in a new country, a friendship outside the classroom with an adult student may be common and enriching. However, teachers who are new to a community should take note of local cultural norms between teachers and students. In some communities, students may perceive teacher-student relationships that move towards friendship as favoritism. In addition, when relationships develop between teachers and students of similar ages, romantic assumptions may arise that can be problematic for all parties (Snow & Campbell, 2017). Some ways for intercultural NESTs to understand the local norms and expectations for teacher-student relationships are to become involved in their local community and to meet their students' families (Arriaza & Wagner, 2012). By investing time learning with their host community, NESTs can develop cultural awareness and social norms to interact with students in appropriate ways (Snow & Campbell, 2017). Relationships with the host community influence the teachers' understanding of their students, the communities from which they come, and how they experience the world (Arriaza & Wagner, 2012). If the teachers attempt to see the world from their students' viewpoint, they may be less inclined to expect students to assimilate to their own cultural and educational practices.

Teacher & student identities; a critical reflection.

As mentioned previously, the intercultural component of *savoirs* includes a reflection on teacher and student identities. It is important to delve more critically into this notion within teacher-student relationships. When new teachers face pressures in the classroom, they tend to resort to their own cultural lens and expect others to adapt to that framework of education (Salmona, Partlo, Kaczynski, & Leonard, 2015). TEFL teachers are thus called to develop their intercultural identity; one that develops in intercultural environments and serves to integrate

others (Yang, 2018). Teachers' combined experiences in classroom teaching as well as life experiences influence their teaching. Teacher participants in Ellis's (2013) study referenced their experiences as students when teaching in the classroom. It is important that teachers reflect on these experiences and critically analyze how they use their identities as students in their teaching practice. They must also recognize that their experiences are intimately tied to their many identities and worldviews. Critical educators understand that one's identity informs how they view the world, and they examine how the language classroom impacts the sociocultural identities of their students (Solano Campos, 2012). TEFL teachers who develop intercultural competence identify and understand the sociocultural identities of their students, and are conscious of issues of power and justice between themselves and their students (Duff & Uchida, 1997). TEFL teachers, especially NESTs, can begin by reflecting on developing their identities as teachers and their ELLs as socially located individuals and students.

Identities are not static, but fluid and developing (Winchester, 2013; Yang, 2018). As mentioned previously, humans' cultural backgrounds shape their identity which impacts the way that they view the world. The first language one speaks is a significant identity marker and shapes the additional identities they embody as they learn a new language (Ellis, 2013). Teachers' and students' identities can change depending upon the context. As people live, study and/or work abroad their identities may shift as they struggle to adapt. They attempt to gain access to a language and culture community as well as expertise in that community, which can lead to tension and negotiations between different viewpoints. Additionally, identities may change and adapt within a new community. Students who wish to gain access to the English speaking discourse community look to their teachers for help. Teachers can legitimize the students' participation in that discourse community as they participate in the TEFL classroom

(Winchester, 2013). As they serve their students in this way, NESTs must also consider their own identity as a native English speaker in a profession that favors NESTs.

NESTs have privileged access to the English discourse community and to the TEFL profession. NESTs from the U.S. in particular have easier access to TEFL positions over NESTs from developing countries such as Jamaica. This discrimination against NNESTs, and NESTs from countries where the variety of English is considered non-standard places preference on the identity of the native speaker from a few select countries. These discriminatory practices are harmful to the relationship between ELLs and their target language and culture (Aslan & Thompson, 2017). While teachers can assist students to participate in the target language discourse community, they must be careful to reflect on their perceptions and projections of what it means to be a native speaker. Additionally, the intercultural person understands that identity is flexible and changing. This understanding is what builds the foundation for intercultural relationships (Yang, 2018). Therefore, it is necessary to develop relationships with students in order to unlearn some of the negative stereotypes or assumptions (Hynds, 2012) and to create appropriate lessons (Snow & Campbell, 2017).

As NESTs build bonds with their students, they can learn from them as well. Students are not blank slates, but are sources of knowledge who can expand the teacher's worldview (Freire, 1999; Hynds, 2012; Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007; Winchester, 2013). Kostogriz and Doecke (2007) attested that students and teachers such as ELLs and NESTs who have different native languages learn from one another. In these TEFL classrooms, NESTs have a responsibility to find value in their students who may be "othered" because of the native language they speak, or their accent in English. As these speakers move throughout the world, they may be judged unfairly for their identity as a non-native speaker of English (Aslan & Thompson, 2017; Solano

Campos, 2014). Building relationships with students may allow NESTs to understand this prejudice and to challenge assumptions that native speakers are superior to non-native speakers. As they build relationships, teachers can learn more about their ELLs' dynamic identities and their areas of expertise. Winchester (2013) argued that by giving ELLs the opportunity to teach about their personal interests, topics or professional areas of expertise through outside discussion or classroom projects affirms the ELL's participation in the English discourse community and their identity as speakers of English.

Teaching from a critical pedagogical lens means inviting students to raise questions in the classroom that address students' formation of their identities and how they enter into different discourses (Kramsch, 2004). While many TEFL educators debate the preferred teaching method, Pennycook (1999) challenged the idea of a hierarchy of methods, and argued for critical teachers who give students control of their education based on their specific interests and needs. Approaching the field of TEFL education from a critical pedagogy perspective invites the teacher to be reflective on the dynamics between students and the teacher (Guilherme, 2002) in and outside the classroom. Savignon (2004) argued that TEFL teachers must examine and question the dynamics between students within the classroom. By concerning themselves with who participates, who dominates, who gets to make decisions and what is the focus of discussion, they address issues of power.

Amidst the spaces of the first language and the target language, learners may create a third space. Entering into the intercultural language classroom invites the intercultural speaker to establish a third space where components of the two languages and cultures interact without losing their essence. NESTs who travel to a new country to teach English as a foreign language live in this third space where they negotiate between the first and second culture (Kramsch,

1993) while decentering themselves from their own singular viewpoint (Si Thang, 2011). Therefore, an intercultural teacher must negotiate their role in the English foreign Language classroom as the space also serves as the third space for their students (Kramsch, 1993). Within this context, cultural boundaries are crossed, and cultural habits and practices are negotiated. In these interactions, the intercultural speaker is conscious of the role they play and reflect on the process of cultural homogenization (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Guilherme, 2002). As teachers build relationships with students in this third space, they must intentionally consider how the process shapes the identities and perspectives of their students.

NESTs must reflect on how their relationships and interactions may impact their students since the NEST may serve as one of the first and/or only native English speakers they know (Farrell, 2014). The critical intercultural teacher has the formidable and important task of taking into account the development of ethnic identities, national identities and personal identities. These evolving identities influence one another as they develop (Guilherme, 2002) and encounter different cultures. As teachers build relationships with students, they must reflect on how these ethnic, national and personal identities influence the intercultural classroom (Kramsch, 1993; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Snow & Campbell, 2017). English foreign language education moves with the forces of globalization, which call language teachers, especially NESTs to adapt to the interconnecting global community (Aguilar-Sánchez, 2005). Anglo Saxon culture is often promoted in the TEFL field by encouraging concepts such as individualism, efficiency and pragmatism (Kramsch, 1993), concepts which are positioned on just one end of Hofstede's (2011) dimensions of culture. Yet, the ideas of intercultural competence and critical pedagogy invite teachers and students to question the pervasiveness of this monolithic cultural approach that can support unfair standards (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007; Kramsch, 1993). Critical

pedagogy calls on the intercultural NEST to reflect on their own identities and assumptions as the "norm" and to be responsible for building relationships with students (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2009). Positive teacher-student interactions can help NESTs come to a better understanding of their students and their students' viewpoints (Snow & Campbell, 2017).

Conclusion

NESTs enter the TEFL classroom with their specific worldview based on their sociocultural background. Simultaneously, they encounter diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their ELLs. Their training and experience as teachers may lead them to teach in a manner that contrasts with students' expectations. In order to effectively interact with and engage their students, NESTs are responsible for developing their intercultural competence to navigate a country outside their own and teach in a new community. They are also responsible for getting to know their students on a personal level in order to find how they must learn English, why they learn English and how English language education impacts them.

Because the Ministry of Public Education in Costa Rica requires English language education, and many local jobs require proficiency in English, and tourism is a growing industry in Costa Rica, the need for interculturally competent English foreign language teachers remains. While the teachers need not be NESTs, those who are NESTs who travel to Costa Rica have an obligation to develop intercultural competence and Spanish language skills. The literature shows that English foreign language education is not neutral and carries social, political and cultural implications. To empower students to take control of their learning, Costa Rica's Ministry of Public Education calls their teachers to employ critical pedagogy in the language classroom, where students question their own beliefs and ideologies. They encourage students to be intercultural by developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes to interact appropriately across

cultural differences. In order to teach intercultural awareness and skills, teachers must also improve their intercultural competence.

Building relationships with students helps the teachers learn more about their individual students, learn their students' native language and develop intercultural competence in and awareness of the host culture. Since NESTs in particular often come from different countries of origin than their students, they have to make a concerted effort to build and maintain relationships with them. Through interactions in the classroom and the efforts they make outside class, teachers gain a deeper understanding of students' needs, motivations, anxieties, interests and goals. As they reflect on these experiences and the ways that they guide students, they can modify their teaching practice to serve their students appropriately. Moreover, by collaborating with students, teachers can cultivate intercultural competence through English foreign language education.

Chapter 3
Methodology

Introduction to Methodology

Qualitative research in education is utilized to better understand and improve instructional practice in education, among other pedagogical phenomenon (Merriam, 2009), and to explore a complex issue within a group or specific population (Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research design allows the researcher to explore how others view the world and their experiences, as well as construct meaning from those experiences (Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 2015; King & Horrocks, 2010; Merriam, 2009). Using a qualitative research design allowed me to study the TEFL phenomenon in the natural setting and to interpret the meaning that NESTs make of their experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Merriam, 2009). This methodology also lends itself to the study of the particular in such a phenomenon, rather than a general understanding (King & Horrocks. 2010). In this study, I explored the way in which teachers perceive their students, as well as their perceptions of culture, language and relationships. A qualitative research methodology allows the researcher to investigate how individuals make meaning from social issues through detailed explorations of their thoughts and perspectives and an analysis of documents that influence their practice.

Rationale for Research Approach

Instrumental case study.

A case study is a qualitative research project that allows the researcher to focus their investigation of a social phenomenon by studying a program, institution, event, process or concept (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Creswell, 2007; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). A case study design allows for a close and subjective study of a phenomenon since the participants can share thoughts, feelings and desires (Merriam, 2009). Stake (2003) argued that a case could be simple or complex; it is the study of one among many. A case study design was chosen for this research

study because it is the examination of NESTs at one language and cultural center in Latin America to explore the thoughts, feelings and experiences of NESTs. A case study design can facilitate understanding of an issue that leads to improvements in practice (Merriam, 2009). It is also appropriate for the study of NESTs' experiences with TEFL because listening to and analyzing the thoughts, feelings and desires of NESTs sheds light on their experiences and perspectives of TEFL and of Costa Rica. The findings have led to suggestions for an improvement in the practice of TEFL particularly for NESTs.

A case study may be instrumental or intrinsic. An intrinsic case study focuses on the case itself to understand a particular person, group, event or organization in detail. This type of case study design would not be used to find general theories regarding this issue (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Stake, 2003) and therefore would not be useful for the research questions guiding this study. An example of an intrinsic case study in the TEFL field may be an exploration of a specific teacher who consistently receives high evaluations from students. That teacher's experience would be unique. An instrumental case study, on the other hand, is one that focuses on an issue in one bound case. It is used to find a theoretical explanation to an issue rather than focus on the specific issue itself (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). The instrumental case study focuses on a subject of study in which the findings can then be used to understand similar issues outside that particular case. Therefore, the findings from the instrumental case study can be transferred to similar contexts (Stake, 2003). Because the practice of TEFL by a NEST is common across Costa Rica and Latin America, and is not unique to one school or center, the instrumental case study design was chosen for this research project. It assists the researcher to understand the theoretical underpinnings of the NEST's experience in one language and cultural center in Costa Rica. The findings and analysis made are transferable

to other TEFL contexts. The insights gained from the study are used to draw implications for the TEFL field.

The case study explores the "how" and "why" of the TEFL phenomenon in Costa Rica, and is not bound by controls as is quantitative research (Yin, 2009). Additionally, a strength of using a case study is in the inclusion of differing ideologies, epistemologies and human paradox (Merriam, 2009). By exploring the teachers' perspectives and their relationships to students, staff and the language and cultural center, I delved into the complexity of TEFL in a real-life context. The case study involved interviews of NESTs and the collection of TEFL certificate program materials and instructional materials. Interviewing teachers allowed for them to share their unique ideologies towards Costa Rica, their students and language education. Reviewing documents and interview transcriptions provided an opportunity to understand epistemological differences and similarities between the participants and the organizations from where they received their TEFL certificates, as well as the ideologies promoted by those people and organizations. Merriam (2009) argued that an important factor to define a case study is to delineate the boundaries of the study. This case study focused on the teaching and learning experiences of new NESTs in a foreign country, and is specific to students learning English in Costa Rica. It was bound to a specific language and cultural center that offers NESTs the opportunity to learn Spanish there. The focus of the research lies in the relationship between language and culture, and between teachers and students.

As with most qualitative research studies, this project was conducted to discover how knowledge is constructed by the people who participate in this pedagogical context (Merriam, 2009; Schwandt; 2000). This qualitative research project is rooted in social constructionism, a paradigm which posits that knowledge is socially and culturally constructed (Creswell, 2007;

Crotty, 2015; Schwandt, 2000). Culture serves as a fundamental guide to people's behavior and thinking (Crotty, 2015; Hall, 1987; Si Thang, 2011). Humans interpret the world around them based on their language, sociohistorical position, shared practices and understandings of life (Schwandt, 2000). To understand how the teachers at this language and cultural center interpret their host community and their positions as NESTs, I interviewed them about the ways they perceive and relate to their students and how they teach English as a foreign language. I also reviewed documents that their TEFL certificate programs used as promotional and instructional items which helped develop their teaching practice, as well as instructional materials they utilized in their TEFL classrooms to see how those perceptions were formed and made manifest.

Through interviews and document analysis, I explored how NESTs shared their culture with their students by choosing what they teach and on what they focus their attention. The interviews and documents also revealed the extent to which the teachers chose to learn about their students' cultures. Interviewing the NESTs allowed me to listen to and analyze how they viewed and described their students, which gave me insight into the way that they constructed meaning of their TEFL experience. I approach this research study with a social constructionist lens because I closely examine how the cultures of both the teachers and their students affect each other. Individuals seek to understand their lived experiences in work and personal life, and this is certainly true for teachers. These meanings are constructed and negotiated through interactions with others (Creswell, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978). The social constructionist paradigm undergirds this study because the teacher participants I interviewed made meaning from their own personal experiences, specifically in the social interactions with their students and community members.

Interviews allow the researcher to understand how NESTs have constructed meaning from those experiences and how such interactions and experiences shape their teaching practice. Analyzing relative TEFL promotional and training documents and instructional materials provides additive insights to their TEFL experience in Costa Rica. Therefore, interviews and document analysis will allow me to explore how NESTs' understanding of their students' culture shapes their teaching practice, and how that understanding leads to teacher adaptation in their classroom. They will also provide insight into how NESTs perceive and adapt to Costa Rica, and how they perceive and respond to the influences of English and U.S. American culture in Costa Rica. More information about the data collection methods is provided below.

Research Setting and Context

This research project was conducted at a private language and cultural center in Heredia, Costa Rica which employs only native speaking Spanish, Portuguese and English teachers. For many years, the Ministry of Education in Costa Rica has placed an emphasis on learning English as a second language (MEP, 2016) in order to compete in areas of trade and tourism (Hernández, 2008). National funding is expended to local universities for NNESTs and NESTs to instruct English to ELLs (Hernández, 2008). Yet, many high school students and working professionals take English classes at private language centers, such as the site of the research study. These private language centers, most of which are located in the Central Valley near the capital, San José (Córdoba González, 2011), recruit NESTs to teach English (Aguilar-Sánchez, 2005; Villalobos Ulate, 2014).

The language and cultural center at which I conducted this study offers English lessons to local students in the community and Spanish classes to a population of students that are mostly visitors to Costa Rica. English students pay for private or group classes that meet one to four days a week. To maintain anonymity, it will be referred to as the language and cultural center. It

was opened in 1993 by a Costa Rican woman and an English-U.S. American woman, both with degrees in language education. It is well known in the Central Valley and recognized as one of the best language and cultural centers in Costa Rica. In addition to Spanish and English classes, they also offer classes in Portuguese. The English department consists of 30 NESTs, the Portuguese department consists of three native Portuguese speaking teachers and the Spanish department consists of four native speaking Spanish teachers. There are approximately 700 English students who take classes outside the normal work and school day. The students in the adult classes range in age from 13 to 50 years old, and the students in the children's classes range in age from five to 12 years old. Most of the students are middle-class working adults. The owners of the center intentionally provide opportunities for the staff to take language classes.

There are many opportunities for the students studying Spanish or English to interact with native English speakers or native Spanish speakers, and learn Costa Rican cooking techniques and dancing. The center itself is brightly painted, well-kept and aesthetically inviting, in addition to the welcoming guard and receptionists who greet everyone that enters the center. The shared kitchen space has appliances and equipment for classes to make food together, and the break room always has fresh coffee. Benches and couches provide multiple places for staff and students to sit and connect with each other or to study. Those are usually the spots where people meet for "intercambios" (Spanish for "interchange"); sessions of linguistic exchange where half of the time is spent speaking English and the other half is spent speaking Spanish. The garden is full of plants and flowers and has tables that are usually occupied by students doing homework.

The site of the study was purposefully chosen because it focuses on teaching English and Spanish languages, as well as Costa Rican cultural traditions and history, in a small city outside

of San José. I also have a personal connection to the site as a former NEST there. Because I used to teach English at this language and cultural center, I was able to reach out to the owners to request permission to conduct this study. The reason for choosing such a center was to focus the case study on a site where teachers have the opportunity to learn more about the host culture as they teach ELLs. The focus of this center is on linguistic and cultural instruction, as opposed to most traditional public and private schools that teach English as one of many subjects. This center offers Spanish classes for the English teachers and opportunities for them as Spanish students to interact with English students in order for each to practice speaking the language of study.

To contextualize the ideas and responses from the teachers' interviews and the notions introduced in the documents reviewed, I include an explanation of the many programs and services offered at the language and cultural center. During the interviews the teachers often referred to the STAR program, team-leads and other concepts unique to the language and cultural center. At the language and cultural center there is a Spanish department as well as a foreign languages department, which consists of the English and Portuguese programs. Three team-leads are three senior teachers who oversee ten teachers each in the English program. These team-leads facilitate workshops for teachers to improve grammar, teach classroom management skills and additional activity ideas. The STAR program is for students who are struggling to keep up with the pace of the class and requires that a student receives eight extra hours of English practice per month. The extra hours of practice are obtained by a variety of free opportunities outside of class time to improve English skills and proficiency. The STAR program consists of Study Hall, Rockstar, intercambios or Coffee Hour.

The team-leads run Study Hall, an hour where many students can get help on specific grammar points or English speaking skills. Study Hall is a time for students to work with a team-lead who reteaches grammar points and takes time to work closely with students who have fallen behind. The team-leads also work to boost students' confidence during Study Hall. Another program called Rockstar involves a free hour of conversation among students that is guided by an English teacher. Coffee Hour is an interchange hour where students studying Spanish meet students studying English and the whole group spends 30 minutes speaking English and 30 minutes speaking Spanish. Students are also encouraged to sign up for intercambios to practice English and Spanish. Although it is not part of the STAR program, the school offers another free opportunity called Puertas Abiertas. This program is a weekly English class for low-income, single mothers at the language and cultural center.

Research Sample and Sources of Data

All of the teachers in the English department are native English speakers, and most come from the U.S., Canada, England, South Africa, Ireland, Australia and the Caribbean. Some have a background in studying Spanish, and others know very little of the language. New teachers are hired every six months and stay for about one to five years. I obtained permission from the co-owners of the language and cultural center and the director of the Foreign Languages Department to conduct the study at their center. The director of the foreign languages department forwarded an email to each teacher in the English department in which I invited them to participate in this research study. The 30 NESTs in this department were thus made aware of the study and were invited to reach out to me if they were interested in participating. The criteria for participation in the study were to be at least 18 years old, a native English speaking teacher in Costa Rica and TEFL certified. The Foreign Language Department director could verify that each of the English teachers met this criteria as it was also part of their criteria for hiring English teachers at the

language and cultural center. Ten teachers responded to the request, and the first six teachers to respond were selected to participate in the research study.

I traveled to Costa Rica to meet with each teacher and interviewed them face to face for 45 to 60 minute sessions. I met with each teacher for three interviews, during which I was intentional about getting to know them and exploring what thoughts, lessons, relationships and experiences have shaped their teaching practices with ELLs. I interviewed the NESTs who have had some experience teaching English, as well as varying levels of experience in Costa Rica. Getting a variety of first-hand perspectives regarding their experiences in a new country, culture and with a new language helped me explore the varied experiences of NESTs in a country outside their own. In addition to conducting interviews, and in order to conduct an in-depth and rigorous research study, I triangulated the data by collecting documents relative to TEFL certificate preparation and practice such as TEFL course preparation website data, promotional materials, books and teaching materials. Below are short descriptions of each of the teacher participants, including their backgrounds and teaching experiences. Pseudonyms are used for all participants.

Participant demographics and TEFL experience.

Robert is a 29-year-old male teacher originally from Texas, in the United States. At the time of the interview, he had spent two years in Costa Rica, and nearly that entire time teaching at the language and cultural center. The first month he was in Costa Rica, he received a TEFL certificate from a TEFL certificate program that will be referred to as TEFL School 1, through face-to-face courses.

Calista is a 43-year-old female teacher originally from Pennsylvania, in the United States. At the time of the interview, she had spent one year and two months in

Costa Rica, and all of that time teaching English at the language and cultural center. She received her TEFL certificate from TEFL School 1 in an online format.

Timothy is a 26-year-old male teacher originally from England. At the time of the interview, he had spent ten months in Costa Rica and nearly all of that time teaching at the language and cultural center. The first month he was in Costa Rica, he received his TEFL certificate from TEFL School 1 through face-to-face courses. He had also previously taught business English in the first few months of living in Costa Rica, traveling to various businesses to teach. He had been teaching part time at the language and cultural center. Eventually, he quit those positions and started working full time at the language and cultural center.

Maryanne is a 47-year-old female teacher originally from Virginia, in the United States. At the time of the interview, she had spent 17 months in Costa Rica and nearly all of that time teaching at the language and cultural center. The first month she was in Costa Rica, she received her TEFL certificate from TEFL School 1 through face-to-face courses. She had also previously taught business English in the first few months of living in Costa Rica, traveling to businesses to teach. However, she stopped teaching at those businesses and just teaches at the language and cultural center and two online courses with private companies.

Veronica is a 27-year-old female teacher originally from British Columbia, Canada. At the time of the interview, she had spent nine months in Costa Rica, and two months teaching at the language and cultural center. The first month she was in Costa Rica, she received her TEFL certificate from another TEFL certificate program that will

be referred to as TEFL School 2, through face-to-face courses. After that, she taught for six months at a different language center in the northwest part of Costa Rica.

Caroline is a 35-year-old female teacher originally from Maryland, in the United States. At the time of the interview, she had spent three years in Costa Rica, with two years of that time teaching at the language and cultural center. The first month she was in Costa Rica, she received her TEFL certificate from TEFL School 1 through face-to-face courses. Prior to that she taught at two different private institutions on the western part of Costa Rica. She also taught English and theatre in the United States, was certified in English and had her Master's Degree in Curriculum Design and Instruction.

Data Collection Methods

The data was collected by interviewing NESTs and collecting documents from TEFL certificate websites, a TEFL certificate resource book, the language and cultural center's English textbook and the teachers' lesson plans. Using more than one method of data collection adds to the credibility and validity of the findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, King & Horrocks, 2010; Mackey & Gass, 2005). While gathering data from teacher interviews and their classroom experiences, I kept a research journal of memos and logs of contact with participants, which Merriam (2009) and Ravitch and Carl (2016) found to assist researchers in reflecting on the process and critiquing their own response. Keeping such journals at the time of data collection helps researchers understand, at a later date, their thought processes during data collection (King & Horrocks, 2010). The memos also allowed me to experiment with different topics as repetitive categories for overarching themes. I connected to my research questions and theoretical framework frequently between interviews and document analysis in order to maintain focus. Given that the unit of analysis is the perspective and reflective experience of teachers, I relied on interviews and teachers' materials to explore and delve into my research questions.

The interview is the form of data collection used to discover what is on the mind and in the hearts of the participants (King & Horrocks, 2010; Merriam, 2009). It provides information about the issue that cannot be observed, such as participant feelings, thought processes and memories (Merriam, 2009). Interviewing teachers allowed me to understand how they connect their knowledge of the local language and culture to their TEFL practice and how their interactions with their students impact their lesson preparation and delivery. I conducted a series of three 45-60 minute interviews with each participant over a two week period. The interviews were semi-structured with pre-established questions ahead of time to ensure I gathered the same specific information from each participant, but could also tailor questions specific to each participant. Semi-structured interviews provide the flexibility to allow for follow-up probing questions and to invite more information to arise naturally in conversation (Merriam, 2009). Adapting questions and modifying the direction of the interviews are beneficial to a study as it allows the research to adjust the focus to fit each participant (King & Horrocks, 2010). Their interviews had some underlying similarities, but in many ways their experiences and responses were unique. Therefore, the interviews were modified to address their unique situations.

The use of semi-structured interviews was most appropriate for this research study. Using structured interview questions, in which all participants are asked the same exact questions in the same order, would not allow the researcher to ask follow up questions when a participant introduces a new topic or issue to the conversation. It also does not create a space of natural conversation between the researcher and the participant. Using unstructured interview questions allows for the teacher participants to speak freely, but would have been more challenging for the researcher to address the topics reviewed in the literature within the limited time the case study took place. Conversely, semi-structured interview questions allow researchers to develop

questions that cover the main points they wish to address. However, semi-structured interviews do not require that the exact same questions be posed in the exact same order to all participants. The researcher is thus able to ask the participants to explain with more detail some of the issues or stories they share, as well as check for understanding when something is unclear (Connolly, 2016). As I aimed to find some common themes across the NESTs' perceptions and experiences, but was bound by a two-week time frame, I used semi-structured interview questions, allowing me to understand how they constructed meaning from their TEFL experiences.

Following Seidman's (2013) framework for a series of interviews, I met with each teacher three times. The first interview allowed me to get to know each participant and contextualize their personal and professional background related to TEFL. We discussed each teacher's TEFL certificate preparation program and their opinions of the program. In the second round of interviews, we discussed their interactions with their local community and the people with whom they work. They also shared their teaching philosophy and teaching styles. I learned more about their day to day practices and how they form relationships with students, fellow teachers and community members. In the third round of interviews, I explored how the participants drew their own meaning from their experiences as teachers of TEFL and of Costa Rica in particular. Each round of interviews was informed by the responses shared in the previous interviews, and probing questions were tailored to each teacher's experience, background and responses. In the third interview, I tied up loose ends on previously discussed topics while the teachers shared their future plans for teaching English, as well as whether they would stay in Costa Rica. Allowing participants to share their experience over a series of three interviews in a two week period enhances the validity of the data by allowing the participants to

reflect on what they share and make alterations when they feel that anything they said was out of context or misinterpreted (Seidman, 2013).

The second form of data collection is a review of TEFL documents, resources and materials used to promote the certificate program for training teachers and for teaching English in their classrooms. Document analysis is a non-intrusive, reliable form of data collection that is not influenced by the presence of a researcher. Additionally, while documents are not modified to fit a certain research topic, they can still give information and insight into the topic (Merriam, 2009). During the first round of interviews, I inquired where each of the teacher participants obtained their TEFL certification and requested access to any documents they had from those courses. Five of the six teacher participants had obtained their TEFL certificate from TEFL School 1, and the training book was shared with me. This book, published in 2016, was designed for NESTs to teach English in a country where English is not the dominant language. It was designed for teaching English to learners of all ages, with one chapter focused on youth and another chapter on English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and Business English. In addition to this TEFL certification course resource, the one teacher participant who obtained her TEFL certificate from TEFL School 2 shared the portfolio that she submitted upon completion of her TEFL certificate. This portfolio contained lesson plans that were annotated by her TEFL instructor providing feedback on her observed lessons. In addition, I went to the websites of the organizations where the teacher participants obtained their TEFL certificate to get more information about the missions and visions of those organizations, and how they prepare teachers to teach English as a foreign language abroad, as well as their Facebook pages for additional promotional posts.

I also collected documents that were used at the language and cultural center. The teachers at this center prepare lessons by creating slides with grammar points and activities for students. They then present them on smart boards in class. The teacher participants also gave me copies of slideshows, lesson plans and activity descriptions they use. I also reviewed the textbooks required for use by the adult English students. These books are a series of TEFL textbooks published in 2005 that the language and cultural center use as a focus of curriculum for the adult classes. The books correspond with the six levels of English proficiency at the center from beginner to advanced- Intro, Book 1, Book 2, Book 3, Passages 1 and Passages 2. I collected documents from Book 2 and Book 3 in regards to topics of communication and cultural exchanges to keep in line with the topic of the research study.

Documents can simply be additional pieces of content information or functioning components that are produced and consumed (Seale, Gobo, Gubrium & Silverman, 2013). The documents I reviewed were functioning components of TEFL education. All of the documents I collected were intentionally constructed and produced by TEFL certificate programs, publishers in the TEFL industry or the teacher participants themselves. These documents are consumed and reproduced by the teachers themselves and their students. These active documents contribute to the intercultural classroom in dynamic ways.

Table 1: Data Collection Grid

Data Format	**Data details**	**Emergent themes**
Interviews	• Six teachers • Three 45-60 minute sessions • Two week period	• Teachers' perceptions of and adaptation to Costa Rica • Teachers' perceptions of and interactions with their students • Teachers' attitudes towards TEFL and responses to students' needs in the TEFL classroom
TEFL certification materials	• TEFL School 1 website • TEFL School 2 website • TEFL School 1 resource book • TEFL School 2 student teacher portfolio	• Teachers' perceptions of and adaptation to Costa Rica • Teachers' attitudes towards TEFL and responses to students' needs in the TEFL classroom
Instructional materials	• ELL Textbook Level 3 • ELL Textbook Level 4 • Teacher Lesson Plans • Teacher Activity slides	• Teachers' interactions with their students

Data Analysis Methods

Thematic analysis.

I focused my analysis through thematic analysis, or "a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) with data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Thematic analysis of transcriptions and documents goes deeper than the words written to discover the underlying meaning and ideologies behind the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For example, when I reviewed the teachers' discussions about their own experiences of culture shock and found a chapter

describing culture shock in the resource book used for their TEFL certificate preparation course, I could connect those data to the underlying idea of cultural transitions. In thematic analysis, the researcher sees something notable in the data before interpreting it. It requires a recognition of important ideas and concepts, then organizing categories and finally addressing the relevant themes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This iterative process begins as data is collected.

Pairing the analysis of interviews with document analysis helped me understand how teachers connect what they learned from their TEFL certificate program to their teaching practice. Document analysis can provide descriptive information and historical background to the concepts under study (Merriam, 2009). Combining interviews with document analysis allows the researcher to find similarities across data that strengthen the findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). The documents also contextualized the teachers' training in their philosophy toward language education. By incorporating the data collected from these resources into my review and analysis of the interview transcriptions, I understand how teachers view the language learning process and intercultural classroom. Analyzing the documents I collected from the teachers both supported and challenged the findings I gathered from interviews. As Merriam (2009) suggested, analyzing documents before an interview can prepare the researcher to ask relevant and descriptive questions. Therefore, I analyzed documents before the first and second interviews to make connections to what the participants shared and delved deeply into how they have formed their teaching philosophy, pedagogy and the practices that they maintain. Referencing the data I found in those documents between interviews provided the opportunity to support and supplement the notions that the teachers explained, and showed how they utilized their TEFL certificate program coursework in their intercultural classroom. For example, I could see from the TEFL training book that as TEFL students, five of the six teachers were presented with the

concept of the iceberg model of culture, attributed to Brake, Medina-Walker, and Walker (1995) and influenced by Hall (1989). Therefore, in subsequent interviews with those teachers, I asked them to think about the many layers of culture in our discussion, rather than speak to culture simply as food, festivals and arts.

While the process of analysis is described below as sequential, in reality, it requires a reviewal and writing, back and forth from one stage to another, in order to build upon themes and reshape them (King & Horrocks, 2010). I utilized Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis: (1) familiarising yourself with your data; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) producing the report. Following this framework, I created six phases to find the themes that arose from the data and to reconnect them to the literature reviewed. As suggested, I reviewed the data and took notes of codes and potential themes in an iterative process before eventually settling on the findings.

1) Review of the data

With permission from the teacher participants, I recorded all interviews in order to pay attention to their responses and to later review each recording. I then transcribed each interview. This allowed me to go back to the exact statements of the participants and ensure that I heard them correctly and did not paraphrase incorrectly. I transcribed the interviews myself based on Merriam's (2009) assertion that a researcher who transcribes their own interviews stays close to the data and is able to compare and contrast the information shared by each participant (Merriam, 2009). I also read through the TEFL preparation course materials, the many pages of the websites of TEFL School 1 and TEFL School 2, the course books used to teach at the language and cultural center and the teachers' lesson plans.

2) Generating initial codes

After transcribing, I coded the transcriptions by making shortened notes and phrases from the participants' responses. These shortened notes and phrases that capture the meaning behind a sentence, thought or visual piece of data are called codes (Saldaña, 2008). In addition to coding the interviews, I also coded the documents I collected from the teacher training materials, websites and teaching resources. Based on the literature reviewed, I looked for the use of concepts such as cultural awareness, intercultural competence, language transfer and interference, and how the documents promote the incorporation of student needs and interests in effective teaching. I looked for these concepts in the teacher training materials as they related to positive teacher development and qualities. Other documents I examined were the materials teachers use in their TEFL classroom. I searched for these concepts and also took note when materials lacked references to such concepts or similar concepts. When there was scant description of issues of English language dominance and issues of power, I knew that the TEFL certificate programs did not find them to be important components of teacher development. When the materials used in the classroom did not make reference to possible connections or potential transfer errors between English and Spanish, nor take into consideration students' needs and interests, the lack of codes for those concepts led me to deduce certain findings regarding teacher practices in the TEFL classroom. As I coded the documents for topics found in the literature, I also looked for connections to the teachers' responses and added these codes to a codes spreadsheet.

3) Searching for themes

Through multiple steps of data analysis, I used both inductive and deductive approaches to coding the interview transcripts, TEFL training websites, TEFL training materials and

teachers' instructional materials. An inductive approach to coding indicates that the codes come from the data and not from pre-established theory. Coding with an inductive approach helps the researcher stay close to the data and not impose their own ideas. The themes that arise from coding with an inductive approach are not confined to a specific theory, but are connected to the data themselves (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). It is necessary to use inductive coding in this case study design so as not to jump to conclusions about what teachers shared or what was discovered in the documents. In the first reading of the transcripts and documents, I coded phrases and sentences that summed up the participant's point or the main idea of a section in a document. In subsequent readings, I looked for common codes across the transcripts and documents and noted the frequency of the most common or similar codes.

After coding each document and interview transcription with inductive coding, I read through them again with a deductive approach. Coding with a deductive or a priori approach means that the researcher views the data with pre-existing ideas for codes (Male, 2016). In this research study, the coding process was influenced by the theoretical framework of sociocultural theory, critical pedagogy and the intercultural communicative competence model. Viewing the data with these theories in mind led to a priori codes that appeared from the connections found in the data to the literature review. It was necessary to use a deductive coding approach in conjunction with an inductive approach because the deductive approach assisted me to make connections between the data and the literature reviewed. By reviewing the common codes that appeared with the most frequency, certain categories became apparent that could expand to general themes.

4) Reviewing themes

Multiple reviews of the transcripts and coding spreadsheet allow the researcher to find the recurring phrases and terms in order to extract themes that arose across all data forms (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As I reviewed the coded transcripts and documents, I generated common categories under which I could place repetitively phrased codes and concepts. These codes were then organized in a spreadsheet to match the codes to the research questions and the new themes I had not anticipated. This spreadsheet served as my case study database. From the spreadsheet I linked the categories with the concepts in my research questions and the concepts found in the literature review. I analyzed where there were discrepancies or confusion and thus reviewed it multiple times. This process helped refine the research questions. From the coding process, I reflected on the themes that emerged and the literature reviewed in order to make sense of the data. As I had doubts or needed clarifications, I performed two member-checks by contacting two of the participants via email and checking with them to get a clearer understanding of their responses and experiences. These processes helped illuminate the overarching themes of the study.

5) Defining and naming themes

After several reviews of the data, I began to narrow my focus onto the most prevalent themes. Those that were most frequently discussed in interviews, illustrated in the documents and supported by the research surfaced as the key themes of this research study. In an iterative process, I reviewed the data, revisited the literature review and looked for more literature that support and challenge the findings. I confirmed that these particular themes were resounding in the research study and relevant to the educative practices of the NESTs. The iterative process led

me to redefine the themes as I connected them to the literature and reviewed their frequency in the data.

6) Analyzing the findings

After many reviews of the interviews conducted and TEFL documents collected, a number of prevalent themes arose from the data. After establishing the most prominent themes, I drew conclusions and organized my findings around the three most prominent themes and made connections for the reader to the literature reviewed and the research questions. The three themes are: (1) Teachers' perceptions of and adaptation to Costa Rica, (2) Teachers' perceptions of and interactions with their students, and (3) Teachers' attitudes towards TEFL and responses to students' needs in the TEFL classroom. The findings are shared and analyzed in the following chapters. Implications for the field of TEFL and the need for further research is shared in the concluding chapter.

Issues of Trustworthiness

To ensure that a research project is significant and valuable, the data collection, analysis and findings must be enacted in a trustworthy way (King & Horrocks, 2010; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I took many measures to enhance the credibility and dependability of this study. One such measure to increase the dependability of data analysis is to record the interviews, transcribe them and read them multiple times to make meaning of the answers provided (Creswell, 2007). After coding the transcriptions and documents collected, I revisited the theoretical perspectives found in the literature and referred back to the codes created in an iterative process. Additionally, I triangulated the data by collecting the data through both interviews and documents of relevant teacher training, websites and teaching materials. Using two methods to collect data enhances the credibility of findings by providing additional information to the phenomenon studied (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998;

King & Horrocks, 2010; Mackey & Gass, 2005; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Being familiar with the participating organization is another way to enhance credibility (Shenton, 2004). I have known about this organization for over seven years, worked with the organization for two years and am familiar with the common practices and culture there. Knowing how the organization recruits students, trains teachers and encourages learning builds a base for my understanding of the teachers that work and learn there.

While collecting data through interviews and analyzing their responses, it is important to stay close to the reality of the participants' intended meaning (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Performing member checks is another way to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Kuckartz, 2014; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Seidman, 2013). After the conclusion of the interviews and reviewing the transcripts, I contacted two of the participants to request that they review some of my ideas and analysis of what they shared to ensure that what I gathered from their responses was in fact what they meant to express. Allowing them to provide additional information or clarify what they had previously stated strengthens the credibility of the study. Member checks also allow participants to provide additional information that may have come to their attention after additional time has passed from the interview (Creswell, 2007; King & Horrocks, 2010; Ravith & Carl, 2016).

Establishing dependability and reliability is part of the researcher's responsibility (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). To do so, I provided detailed explanations of each step in the process. I wrote with rich, thick description to help readers ascertain the information that they might find transferrable. By giving rich details to the subjective perspectives of the participants, I intend to illustrate their experiences and bring their teaching practices to life. When I felt that my subjective perspective might have prevented me from seeing multiple sides of the data, I asked

two independent coders to also code the data. This practice forces researchers to be reflexive in the manner that they code and to consider differing perspectives toward the data (King & Horrocks, 2010). These independent coders were fellow teachers who are not language educators. Therefore, they viewed the data from the lens of a teacher, but with a distance from the TEFL phenomenon. By approaching this research project from a sociocultural lens and with a critical pedagogical perspective, I analyzed the data collected by looking for the relationships between language and culture in and outside the TEFL classroom.

Limitations and Delimitations

In every research project there are some limitations to the research project and data collected that may shape the research findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). One such limitation is the amount of time spent with the participants. If I were able to spend at least six months with the participants, this would have allowed me to get to know them better and see their developing perspective over time. Perspectives grow and change over time, and spending just a few weeks with the participants, while unobtrusive, is not ideal. Interviewing more teachers would enhance the dependability of my findings and broaden the scope of information I collect.

While it is helpful to have many data sources, I was intentional about placing parameters to control the kind of data I collect and from specific sources. I have restricted the people I interview to those in one organization in order to see how their shared experience may provide commonalities in their responses. Interviewing teachers at multiple sites would broaden the myriad of experiences and responses. By collecting data from just one organization, I focused my research on the shared experience of these specific teachers. I was also able to delve more deeply into their natural setting of TEFL education in a language and cultural center as I spent time talking with them in their setting, speaking to their colleagues and waiting for them in their work space. The manner in which they may partake in the same professional development

trainings and the influences from this specific language and cultural center allowed me to provide more rich descriptions to this specific case.

Conclusion

This qualitative case study was designed in order to understand the perspectives and experiences of NESTs in Costa. It was conducted at a language and cultural center where NESTs are often new teachers of English. Data was collected through a series of three interviews with six NESTs, and documents related to TEFL certificate programs and instructional materials used in the classroom. The semi-structured interviews provided insights into the daily lives of NESTs as they taught Latin American students, and the associated documents gave evidence of teachers' techniques, trainings and preparations. A thematic analysis was used to explore, understand and analyze the data, and find the emergent themes that address the research questions.

Chapter 4
Findings and Discussion:
Teachers' perceptions of and adaptations to Costa Rica

At the time of our interviews, all of the teachers had spent three years or less living in Costa Rica, and five of the six teachers had no prior teaching experience before transitioning to Costa Rica. Therefore, a large part of their transition to a new career also involved the transition to a new country. Juggling a new career and an international move can place a lot of strain on a person (Snow & Campbell, 2017), which is why their perceptions of Costa Rica as a country and Costa Rican people play important roles in their experiences as NESTs. In this chapter, one of the three themes that emerged from the data is reviewed. I present and analyze the teachers' perceptions of Heredia- the city where they lived and worked, Costa Rica in general, and their attitudes and experiences with Costa Rican people. It should be noted that Costa Ricans refer to themselves as Ticos or Ticas, and the teachers used those diminutive terms as well. As foreigners, the NESTs shared the ways that they needed to adapt to a new country, new cultures and a new language in order to survive and to thrive in a new environment. I also analyze how their experiences and abilities to adapt to Costa Rica connect to the development of intercultural competence using Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence.

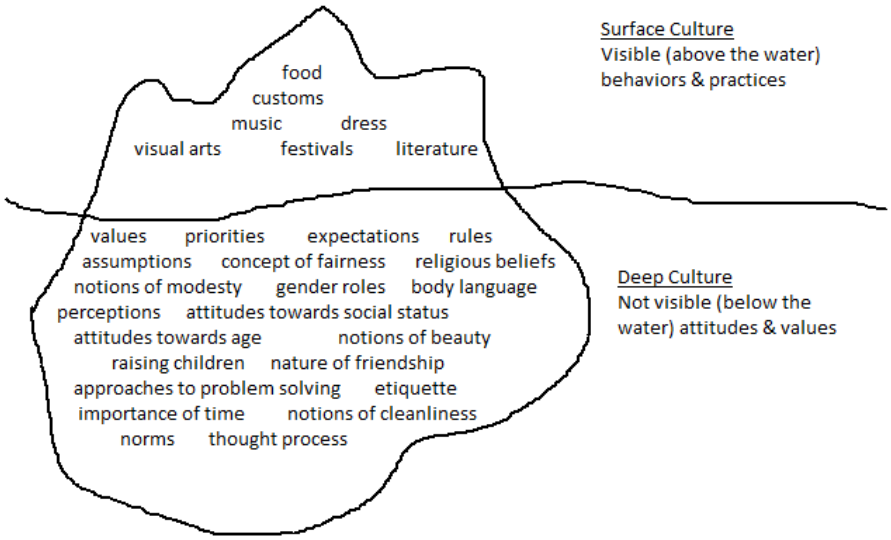
Perceptions of Culture

The notion of culture has many layers. In our discussions, the teachers and I talked in generalities about their experiences in Costa Rica, as well as specific experiences regarding their students. It should be noted that the cultural backgrounds of their students and the ideas the teachers shared about them cannot be generalized for all people in Costa Rica. Additionally, while most of the students were from Heredia and neighboring cities, some of their students were originally from the northwest province of Costa Rica, and a few were from Nicaragua, Colombia

and Venezuela. Therefore, their reports of certain student values, attitudes, practices and beliefs cannot be labeled as Costa Rican, although they often made such generalizations.

Five of the six teachers obtained their TEFL certificate in Costa Rica in face-to-face classes, and the sixth teacher obtained her certificate in an online format. The teacher who studied in an online format with TEFL School 1 reported that she gained some cultural sensitivity training for intercultural situations, but did not receive enough Costa Rica specific information to prepare her for the transition. Those who studied in Costa Rica at TEFL School 1 and TEFL School 2 were able to learn about Costa Rica through their TEFL certificate program and their month long training in the community while they studied. These teachers noted that the program and the instructors helped them transition to Costa Rica. In the resource book required by TEFL School 1, the chapter regarding cultural sensitivity presents the notion that culture is like an iceberg (Figure 2) in which there are visible behaviors and practices above the surface of the water. Attitudes, values and perspectives that are labeled below the surface are not as readily visible (Anonymous 1, 2016). In their reflections, teachers shared a combination of perceptions of Costa Rican culture such as foods and festivals, as well as underlying attitudes about behaviors, lifestyles and values. Many of the concepts listed below the surface of the water in the image presented below were topics the teacher participants and I discussed as they described their joys and struggles of adapting to Costa Rica.

Figure 2: Iceberg Model of Culture



Source: Anonymous 1 (2016). TEFL School 1 Resource Book

Perceptions of religion.

Part of a successful transition to a new country and culture requires the savoirs described by Byram (1997). The manner in which the teachers reflected on religious practices in Costa Rica demonstrated their varying levels of savoir comprendre, savoir faire and savoir être. Religion plays an important role in the lives of many Costa Ricans and in the lives of the students at the language and cultural center. Costa Rica is largely a Catholic country. Nearly 72% of the population is Roman Catholic (CIA, 2016) and it is the official religion of the country (Constituteproject.org, 2012). Therefore, many cultural practices, values and beliefs are steeped in the Catholic heritage. In addition to students who identified as Catholic, some of the teachers' students identified as atheist, Evangelical, Jehovah's Witness or other Protestant denominations. Certain topics of discussion in class are influenced by the students' religious upbringing and the teachers were often aware of this.

The NESTs learned about religion and values in Costa Rica through their students and other Ticos. Robert discussed how religious views impacted his classroom discussions by sharing that he had some students who he referred to as "bible thumpers;" those who he claimed asserted what is right and wrong during discussions. At a different point in our interviews he added that he had great respect for the religious Costa Ricans who opened their homes to those who participated in the Romería, a Costa Rican pilgrimage consisting of a long journey. Robert's response regarding some of his students as "bible thumpers," did not initially demonstrate savoir être towards their experiences and religious beliefs. He was contrasting his students by illustrating that they fall on a spectrum of beliefs and lifestyles. The label of "bible thumper" does not contextualize their beliefs in their sociocultural background. However, when he later added that he respected some Ticos' dedication to the experience of a pilgrimage, his attitude was more open towards this religious practice. He described his students as being on a spectrum of beliefs and lifestyles, thereby not essentializing them as all the same. He stated that they have a range of lifestyles and preferences which indicated that he was getting to know them personally and differentially. Over time and through discussions with Costa Ricans, Robert developed his knowledge, or savoirs, of the plurality of Costa Rican people by demonstrating that he found many differing cultural groups within Costa Rica and by appreciating their religious practices.

The pilgrimage Robert was referring to was the Romería, a major Costa Rican holiday which is celebrated by an annual pilgrimage in August that starts in the capital of San José, or from people's homes all over Costa Rica, and ends at the Basílica Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles in Cartago. The pilgrimage commemorates the time when an apparition of La Virgen, also known as La Negrita, appeared to a young girl in Cartago, reportedly in the 1630s. La Negrita is an icon of Mary, the mother of Jesus of Nazareth. Thousands of people make the pilgrimage each

year to ask La Virgen for something they need in their lives. There have been many shared stories of the Virgin Mary performing miracles for those who make the sacrifice of the journey, such as curing cancer (Sharman, 2006).

One teacher, Veronica, reported that she participated in the Romería to learn more about it. Veronica started in San José and made the 25 kilometer journey to Cartago with some fellow NESTs and her Costa Rican colleagues from the language and cultural center. She noted that she was not religious, but that it was a beautiful experience in which she partook, ending at a lovely church. She learned from her Costa Rican colleagues that one was supposed to ask the Virgin Mary for something before making the journey, and that making the sacrifice of the journey would result in the answering of one's prayer. The choice to participate in this experience not only exemplified Veronica's savoir être, but it showed that she was willing to learn more about this important aspect of Costa Rican culture. She also used that experience to start conversations with students. Her desire to have conversations in class indicated that she wanted to connect with her students about the experience and to learn more about the pilgrimage.

The act of walking with colleagues and learning about the journey characterizes savoir faire, because Veronica participated with her Costa Rican colleagues in a spiritual journey. As Byram (1997) attested, savoir faire is the ability to learn more about a new culture and interact appropriately based on what is learned. By acknowledging that she was not religious, but still wanted to participate in the pilgrimage, Veronica demonstrated that learning about the traditional journey was important. While it cannot be deduced from her account of the pilgrimage if she conducted herself with respect and learned from the experience, she did attempt to position herself in the role of a sojourner and used that experience to further conversations with her students. Snow and Campbell (2017) argued that attempting to learn from the host community is

a way to positively adapt to the new community. Veronica's participation in the Romería, as she shared, was a way to learn more about her students' culture. As she discussed the experience in class, she also sent a message to her Costa Rican students that she was interested in experiencing the tradition that to many of them, was of great importance.

Caroline referenced that she used the Romería as an example in class as well. As she tried to explain her excitement over enriching her Irish heritage by kissing the Blarney Stone, she compared the experience to the Costa Rican pilgrimage of the Romería. When her students did not understand her desire to kiss the Blarney Stone in Ireland, she asked why they would want to make the journey to Cartago and walk part of the way on their knees. The students responded that it was wonderful and holy, and Caroline argued that was how she felt about kissing the Blarney Stone. In this way, Caroline demonstrated that people follow different traditions from different cultures, and that it is good to admire one another's faith and customs. She was showing students that she was able to interpret the experience of the Romería in Costa Rica and empathize with those who experience it in order to compare and contrast it with the Irish's view of the Blarney Stone. She was utilizing her skill of savoir comprendre to make the connection for students and showing them how to compare and contrast differences across cultural norms with respect.

While most of the teachers did not speak extensively about their own religious beliefs, Maryanne was the only teacher who shared going to church as a part of her weekly practice in Costa Rica. Maryanne stayed with a host family her first few weeks in Costa Rica, and they introduced her to the church she attended. She noted that it was hard to find a Protestant church in a country that is largely Catholic, but she was fortunate to have the host family she lived with bring her to that church. She was also excited that the church provided earphones through which

she could listen to an English translation of the service. Connecting to a Costa Rican family, building relationships with them and partaking in weekly church services revealed to Maryanne a perspective of Costa Rica that most tourists do not see. While many teachers spend a lot of free time with other NESTs, because of her faith, Maryanne had the opportunity to share the same faith with this family. In this religious experience and relationships, she was able to relate to Costa Ricans in a deep and personal way. She excitedly shared that she and the family used to travel together to visit the many beautiful churches in Costa Rica, and she continued to visit the family every week. When people from different cultural backgrounds connect over an intimate subject, it can close the social distance discussed by Arriaza and Wagner (2012). Religion is an intimate subject that brings people together across national boundaries. As teachers make deep and personal connections in the community, they are better able to understand the perspective of those individuals and have a positive experience as a visitor (Snow & Campbell, 2017). This was one of the reasons that Maryanne spoke so fondly of her host family and her opinions of Costa Ricans.

Perceptions of family values.

Each of the teachers spoke about their perception of familial and communal ties in Costa Rica. In many ways, the teachers' perceptions of Costa Ricans' values and attitudes toward family and community reflect Hofstede's (2011) dimension of collectivism on a national level and local level. The ways in which Costa Rican families lived together and relied on one another was perceived as different from the U.S.'s sense of individualism. The NESTs came from individualistic societies of the U.S., Canada and England, which is why some of them noted certain differences in perspectives towards family and living arrangements in Costa Rica. While not all communities and cultures within the U.S., Canada and England focus on individualism,

the general attitude towards society in those countries is to pursue personal success and look out for the individual first. The teacher participants shared many ways in which their Latin American students and Costa Rican neighbors and friends exemplified collectivist practices and values.

A holiday that Maryanne, Robert and Caroline felt illustrated Costa Rica's values and respect for mothers is Mother's day. Mother's day is celebrated every August 15th and is a Costa Rican national holiday. Many businesses are closed, there is no school, and people spend the whole day celebrating their mothers and grandmothers. Caroline shared that one of her students gave her a gift the day before Mother's day to show her appreciation for her and the fact that she is a mother. Robert argued that there is a great respect for mothers in Costa Rica, and he appreciated that the country prioritized the protection of children by ensuring that fathers are a part of their children's lives. He said while the U.S. celebrates Mother's day too, Costa Ricans have a more demonstrative way of celebrating their mothers on this day. Maryanne also noted a great respect for mothers and the desire of their adult children to live with or near them. Maryanne was surprised and even expressed frustration when students shared that they would pass up their dream job and an opportunity to gain more money if it required that they had to leave their mothers behind and move to a new country. The dissonance Maryanne had expressed here demonstrated the difference in national values between U.S. individualism and Costa Rican collectivism. In collectivist societies, the family takes care of each other and there is not pressure to leave the home and live by one's self. In contrast, individualist societies encourage young adults to take care of themselves and be independent (Hofstede, 2011). Therefore, Maryanne's perspective was likely steeped in her U.S. American background which conflicted with her students' collectivist background that put family and community before the individual.

The idea that family comes first for Costa Ricans, was a perspective shared by most of the teachers. They reported that many Costa Ricans spoke highly of their families and the importance of spending time with them. Maryanne attested that the typical household in Costa Rica looked different from the typical family households in the U.S. She claimed that as children turn 18 in the U.S., parents are eager for them to move out of the house. However, in Costa Rica, the average household contained the parents, sometimes grandparents and adult children until they got married. She stated that some adults got married and then moved their spouse in to live with their family. She also shared that mothers worship their sons. She noted that they talked extensively about their sons, but not as much about daughters, and this surprised her. She attested that many of her students followed traditional gender roles where women cook and clean, and men work outside the home to provide the main financial support for the family. These traditional roles were hard for her to accept because they were so different from her upbringing and the family she had created. Conversations with students regarding family and gender roles were opportunities for Maryanne to develop the knowledge of savoirs. As mentioned, savoirs requires the recognition that there are multiple worldviews, and that people come to their differing worldviews based on their sociocultural background (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). It appears as though Maryanne was building this consciousness of difference, though she expressed frustration with some of those differences.

Collectivist cultures across the world that are impacted by the TEFL field are influenced by Anglo Saxon culture and ideals such as individualism, efficiency and pragmatism (Kramsch, 1993). Some of the teachers' personal values illustrated a difference in the individualism versus collectivism dimension of culture. Many of the NESTs reported that family was a primary value in their life, and they had all left their families to travel and pursue careers in another country.

Timothy shared that one of the things he valued most was pursuing what made him happy even when it disappointed his parents. He shared that his parents wanted him to get a stable job in England right after completing his university degree. However, he traveled for four months instead and then got a job in England. Eight months later he decided to quit his job and travel again, much to his parents' dismay. The spirit to travel by one's self and/or move to a new country for fun and exploration is a component of individualism. While Maryanne reported that she did not understand her students' hesitation to leave their family, Timothy, on the other hand, knew some Costa Ricans who similarly wanted to travel and live abroad like him. Thus, it would be problematic to conclude that all Costa Ricans would not want to leave their family for work. However, these examples of Costa Ricans putting their family's needs first and living together into adulthood are some examples of a collectivist mindset, and a few others will be explored in a later section. The NESTs often showed that they understood and respected this dimension of Costa Rican culture and benefited from it.

Perceptions of communication styles.

As the TEFL School 1 resource book stated, even if the teachers do not speak the local language, it is more important to have the intercultural competence to know what to say, how to say it, and when to say it (Anonymous 1, 2016). Many teachers shared that it was customary in Costa Rica to be indirect and polite to a point where the truth would be avoided to protect someone's feelings. The NESTs therefore had to learn the difference between what was said by Costa Ricans versus what might be meant. Caroline noted that after three years in Costa Rica she was learning to read people's body language, because when someone said that they wanted to hang out with her, they did not always mean it. The agreement to meet up with another person was often a polite response to an invitation, not necessarily a commitment to do so. Through her

partner's family and acquaintances, Caroline learned that when invited to a gathering, Ticos might say "yes" to the invitation, but would not always come. This aspect of communication Caroline attributed to Costa Rican culture, and she shared that it was difficult to know when someone truly wanted to meet up with her. She learned how to read people's body language to understand if someone was just being polite when they said "yes" to an invitation. This was why Caroline said that it was hard for her to make friends with Ticos, but also that it taught her to adjust the way she communicated. Caroline observed,

> I think that overall Costa Ricans are so accepting and loving and caring. Um... I think that I've developed a little more tact, because it's a very passive-aggressive culture. Um... So I... I think I'm more careful about how I approach things now. I'm not as direct... as I once was. Um... I think that I'm more conscious about how what I say and do affects other people. Whereas in the United States, I think we're almost taught not to care.

This passage is indicative of what most of the teachers shared regarding their adaptation to what they perceived was a less direct style of communication in Costa Rica. Caroline also learned from her husband's grandmother that the hand gesture to ask someone to come closer was different from that which was used in the U.S. In the U.S., the gesture to call someone towards you is to hold the hand with fingers up, palm facing you and waving the hand towards your body. In Costa Rica, the gesture is used with the fingers down, palm facing you and waving the hand towards your body. Caroline used this learning experience as a way to develop savoir comprendre by comparing and contrasting cultural differences between her own way of communicating nonverbally and Costa Rican ways of nonverbal communication. Learning the host community's ways of interacting can assist NESTs to avoid making intercultural offenses (Snow & Campbell, 2017).

Hall (1997) noted that culture is expressed not just through words, but also through nonverbals such as body language and gestures. Learning to be culturally appropriate through gestures and body language builds NESTs' intercultural competence and helps them transition to a new cultural space (Yang, 2018). The NESTs received little guidance from their TEFL Schools regarding nonverbal communications. The comparison of nonverbal communications was referenced in the TEFL School 1 resource book, yet did not provide specific examples for communication in Costa Rica. The chapter on cultural sensitivity reviewed nonverbal communication components such as head movements, hand gestures, appearance, posture, ways of talking, sounds, closeness, eye movement, body contact and facial expressions. The book also reviewed some common confusing gestures across national or cultural boundaries. For example, the hand gesture for "OK" in the U.S. is made by making an "O" with the thumb and index finger and holding the other three fingers up. Yet, in Japan this means money, in France it means zero and in many countries it is considered an obscene gesture (Anonymous 1, 2016). While those examples were likely helpful to teachers moving to France or Japan, there were no guidelines for Costa Rican nonverbal customs. Therefore, the only way the NESTs were to learn about nonverbal communication was through self-exploration or trial and error.

Ensuring that they are not being offensive to their host community is not only a sign of respect, but a way for NESTs to smooth the transition to a new cultural community (Snow & Campbell, 2017). While some of the NESTs were frustrated by the manner in which they were expected to be less direct, most of them adapted and changed the way that they communicated in order to maintain respect and be culturally appropriate. They all shared moments in which they reframed what they were saying to be less direct, found more tact to express themselves or altered their nonverbal communications to avoid misunderstandings. Their willingness to adapt

their communication style exemplified the savoir être needed in an intercultural space. Their positive attitude helped them learn new ways of communicating that they did not learn in their TEFL preparation course. The ability to maintain positive communications because of what they learned from the host community exemplified their growing savoir faire.

Cultural clashes.

In their transitions to Costa Rica, the teachers reported some instances where they experienced negative interactions in their daily lives. Some of the experiences they attributed to cultural differences or just simply a negative one-time experience. Nonetheless, it was through the assistance of their Costa Rican friends and the other NESTs that they learned to manage difficult or uncomfortable situations. A topic of concern that some of the NESTs attributed to Costa Rican culture was the way that Ticos spoke about race. Calista and Veronica shared that their students did not understand the weight and severity of using a racist term like the n-word, and this was a great challenge to them. Calista claimed this was a part of Costa Rican culture. Both teachers reported that they had felt very angry in their classes when their students made racist jokes, and that they felt the students should know it was terribly wrong to make racist comments. Their descriptions of these situations and their reactions indicated that they did not know exactly how to handle those situations. However, Calista gained perspective from her Spanish teacher. Calista shared that when she took Spanish classes, her Afro-Caribbean teacher explained to her that Costa Ricans did not have the same historical background of slavery that the U.S. does. Calista shared that after speaking with her Spanish teacher, she understood that her students did not have the same experience that she did learning about racism in the U.S., and that she knew she was not going to change this aspect of what she considered Costa Rican culture. This is discussed further in chapter six.

What Calista's Spanish teacher shared with her was an explanation of a critical historical perspective of education. Solano Campos (2012) affirmed that teachers should question how knowledge is constructed and why certain knowledges are valued and others marginalized. While the U.S.'s history of slavery is unique, Costa Rica does have a history of slavery, and its own issues with racism. Costa Rica was not a large slave-owning society, because it proved uneconomical, but many laborers of African descent were brought to Costa Rica to work on the railroad and on plantations. They were mostly based in the eastern province of Limón and did not receive citizenship until 1948. Attitudes towards the African and Caribbean immigrants in Costa Rica in the 1800s and early 1900s were based in fear of crime and miscegenation. During this time, Costa Ricans prided themselves on being Spanish descendants. As the European immigrants came to Costa Rica, there was a small indigenous population, and many died because of exposure to European diseases. Therefore, there was less miscegenation between the Europeans and the indigenous people which has led light skinned Costa Ricans to identify as "racially pure" (Harpelle, 2001, p. xiii). There is still hostility between light skinned and dark skinned Costa Ricans today, as well as racism towards indigenous groups. Many light skinned Costa Ricans exhibit a fear of those living in Limón, as some of the NESTs shared. Calista attested that the only reason people refer to Limón as unsafe, is due to the fact that the majority of the population there are people of African descent and indigenous groups.

These teachers' perspectives of racism in Costa Rica were shaped by their own sociocultural backgrounds and education, as well as their relationships to Ticos. This topic was discussed by three of the teachers and showed the tensions between the NESTs and their students as well as between the NESTs and their host community. In addition to racism, teachers shared instances of other identity-based discrimination. Maryanne learned through her colleague's

experiences that it was difficult to be gay in Costa Rica, and he did not always feel comfortable walking down the street. Some of the female teachers noted that they felt they had to be more careful traveling around Costa Rica by themselves than they did in their home countries. Experiences of identity-based discrimination bothered them.

Some of the teachers addressed the instances of machismo that they observed and experienced in Costa Rica. Robert shared that he was disgusted by it and felt compelled to call people out for it in public. Many instances of men staring at women or making sexist comments bothered him, and he stated that he wanted the person to feel embarrassed. He also reported that a conversation with a female friend who experienced sexual assault on the bus and her fears of retaliation helped him understand the global problem women face in their everyday lives. Therefore, he wanted to address that issue and did so by shaming men he observed ogling women in public. While machismo exists all over the world, Robert felt that he experienced it more in Costa Rica. His response to it demonstrated an interesting dynamic as a male, and a foreigner to Costa Rica.

Robert mentioned that it was not his place as a U.S. American to change Costa Rica, yet it was also apparent that he felt it was his place as a male to address discrimination against women. This exemplified an intersectional dilemma for him without an easy answer. Guilherme (2002) argued that addressing intercultural situations requires a deep understanding of multiple, intersecting identities to find a common ground among people who face misunderstandings. This understanding and skill of addressing machismo was something that Robert needed in intercultural contexts. In a subsequent chapter, I address how he handled instances of machismo in the classroom.

Many teachers who travel to a new country express frustrations that their host country does not meet their expectations of efficiency (Snow & Campbell, 2017). Some of the NESTs reported that they experienced such feelings of frustration toward the disorganization and the value of time in Costa Rica. Calista shared that because she was such a punctual person it frustrated her that someone might agree to meet at one time, but showed up 45 minutes later. She shared that this was a common and accepted behavior in Costa Rica. Robert believed that Costa Ricans' had a relaxed attitude toward being late, and thus they mostly remained calm and did not worry about it. Costa Ricans pride themselves on being laid-back and carefree towards timeliness, and this contrasted with some of the teacher participants' ways of living. At times this made their transition to Costa Rica difficult, but they all learned how to accept it.

Caroline referred to Costa Rica as chaotic and argued that even in businesses and educational institutions, decisions were made and actions were taken on a whim. Therefore, she argued that having non-Costa Ricans in leadership positions helped keep the business organized at her current place of employment. Similarly, Calista shared that everyday tasks like going to the bank were more difficult than they were in the U.S. because they often required multiple steps and many people's assistance to complete a transaction. These criticisms of Costa Rica illustrated the challenges the NESTs experienced living in a new country. Their reactions were typical of culture shock in which one is resistant to certain aspects of the host culture. Snow and Campbell (2017) argued that another term for culture shock is culture fatigue, which they argued is the feelings of physical, mental and emotional drain caused by the constant attempt to make sense of a new environment. As the NESTs were trying to adjust to daily encounters and pace of life, they felt frustrated at times by the differences between Costa Rican norms and their previous

way of living. If the NESTs kept working on developing their intercultural skills and maintaining a positive savoir être, they would be better able to address these concerns.

Unexpected Challenges, Support and Adaptations

NESTs' ability to adapt to their new host culture has a great impact on their perceptions of the country and the experience in general and can impact their teaching. NESTs who have a poor experience can develop a negative attitude toward the host culture and towards their students (Snow & Campbell, 2017). The NESTs in this study found that they made adjustments to a new way of life because of unexpected expenses, difficulty tackling the logistics of various needs and for some of them, the inability to speak Spanish. Calista was frustrated that she did not know that unfurnished apartments in Costa Rica do not come with a stove or refrigerator and she had not been able to buy them. To adapt to that unexpected surprise, she said that she only bought microwaveable food and shopped frequently to eat perishable food immediately. When Robert realized that meat was too expensive, he changed his diet to be mostly vegetarian. Caroline was frustrated that she could not drive and had trouble obtaining a Costa Rican driver's license. This made her feel that she had less freedom in Costa Rica. As mentioned before, these NESTs had all spent three years or less in Costa Rica. Therefore, most of them were still figuring out how to find their way and settle down in a new city and country. These frustrations are common issues that one may encounter when moving to a new culture or country. They all utilized various skills to adapt to the new environment and relied on the people around them to help with the transition.

The NESTs were able to adapt to a new environment with help from local individuals and their fellow NESTs. While they also shared some negative experiences of their time getting around the country, such as taxi drivers who overcharged them or receiving unwanted attention as a single female traveling, the teachers shared many positive experiences of their time

transitioning to Costa Rica. Maryanne shared that even though she did not speak Spanish she was able to survive because merchants and the employees of the bank always looked out for her and helped her when she visited. The NESTs all shared stories of moments when they turned to the other NESTs for help. It was apparent from every teacher participant's reflections that they relied on their colleagues to help them design class, troubleshoot difficult situations in class, and understand and navigate Costa Rican culture. The NESTs socialized with one another inside and outside of the language and cultural center. They planned outings with one another on the weekends, exploring Costa Rica and introducing each other to Costa Rican friends.

Moreover, some teachers reported that their students helped them outside of class by assisting them to navigate Heredia and Costa Rica. Trying to find health care in a new country when one is not fluent in the language can be a hurdle. Fortunately for Veronica, one of her students who was a dentist helped her with a dental issue and then invited her over for lunch. Calista noted that her students helped her get a new battery for her phone and offered her a ride to class when they saw her waiting for the bus. These examples show the ways that Ticos, in general, and their students, in particular, are generous with their assistance to teachers. The many instances in which the teachers noted that their students and local Ticos helped them showed again that the Costa Ricans tend to behave with a collectivist mindset, and as mentioned before, the teachers benefitted from this. While the help from others can initially support a new NEST transition to a new country, overtime such reliance can become burdensome. Therefore, it is important for NESTs to learn how to navigate on their own, by learning more about the culture and language of their host community (Snow & Campbell, 2017).

The NESTs had to adapt in many ways to a simpler lifestyle in the city of Heredia, and many shared that they liked the ways in which they had to adapt. None of them were able to

drive to the language and cultural center and thus traveled by bus, bike or foot, and Robert spoke frequently about the inspiration he felt biking to work. Maryanne stated that she loved the transition to Costa Rica because she had less excess in her life than she did in Virginia. She learned to live with less stuff and to forgo some of the luxuries she enjoyed in the U.S. and loved that simpler lifestyle. Robert felt that Costa Rica was making him stronger and more versatile, and Timothy argued that Costa Rica taught him to be independent. Calista found that Costa Rica was forcing her to let go of control and to be flexible. She recognized that because the task of going to the grocery store required so much of her attention, she could not worry about what was next on her list of things to do. She could only focus on the task in front of her. This gave her a sense of calm and taught her how to adapt mentally. A few teachers discussed that they appreciated the *pura vida* mentality of Costa Rica. Pura vida literally translates to "pure life," in Spanish. However, it can be used to mean "hello," "goodbye," "take it easy," "no worries" and "thank you," among other things. Maryanne read *pura vida* to mean, "nothing is that serious." Not only did the NESTs who used the phrase pura vida appreciate the concept, it also taught them how to adapt. Maintaining the mentality that "nothing is that serious" helped them face the cultural differences mentioned in the previous section and the unexpected daily challenges they faced in their new setting.

These examples of adaptations to daily life show that the teachers faced positive and negative changes to their new lifestyle in Costa Rica. They changed their diet and manner of transportation and some learned to be more independent. Their mixed reactions showed both the good and bad sides of their transition. While the challenges sometimes slowed them down and caused frustrations, they all agreed that they were happy in Heredia. Snow and Campbell (2017) argued that maintaining a positive attitude and trying to find the reasons behind the differences in

life they experienced are tools NESTs can use to adapt to their host country. Maintaining an open attitude helps them avoid burnout that can come from a drastic move. Additionally, they argued that trying to explore more about their host culture would assist with keeping that positive attitude.

The NESTs generally maintained that positive attitude and consistently reported that they made efforts to explore Costa Rica. Their understanding and appreciation of the *pura vida* mentality was a step in the right direction towards understanding the Costa Rican attitudes and behaviors towards time, as outlined in the previous section. Learning about the local culture, especially the *pura vida* mentality, contributed to their growth in savoirs about Costa Rican culture. They also developed savoir faire as they used this mentality to adapt. They learned to relax in the face of a stressful situation, like a difficult encounter at the bank in order to behave appropriately in their new cultural context. Moreover, while their fellow NESTs helped them transition to Costa Rica, building relationships with Costa Ricans would help them further understand and adapt to these unexpected challenges.

NESTs' Reframing Perspectives and Understanding Privilege

Being critically conscious within a new cultural setting requires that NESTs develop the skills, attitudes and values embodied by that the culture (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002). The NESTs showed critical consciousness when they learned to adapt to Costa Rican norms and did not expect Ticos, especially their students, to adapt to their cultural norms. Veronica changed the way that she referred to the U.S. after learning that her students disliked the term "America" to refer to the U.S. Her students noted that the U.S. was only one country in the Americas, and therefore she adjusted the way she referred to the country and the people.

Similarly, Caroline learned that there are varying perspectives on the number of continents in the world. Contrary to what is taught in the U.S., Costa Ricans are taught that there

are six continents, while in the U.S. students are taught that there are seven. In Costa Rica, South and North America are viewed as one continent and not two. At Caroline's previous institution, a teacher was reprimanded for teaching the students that there were seven and not six continents. Initially, Caroline agreed with the reprimanded teacher because she also had been taught that there were seven continents. However, when it was explained to her that Costa Rica views North and South America as one continent, Caroline altered her way of thinking and accepted that position as also true. Being adaptable to different ways of viewing the world showed the teachers' development of savoir être. Veronica changed the way she referred to the U.S. because she listened to her students' perspective. Additionally, Caroline grew to understand that the number of continents in the world can be viewed with multiple answers. As Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) argued, an essential step of developing savoirs is recognizing that one's own worldview is not the only worldview. Letting go of the need to be right and seeing the perspective of others is a critical way to adapt to a new environment.

Robert's experience in Costa Rica led him to reframe his understanding of patriotism. During his Spanish classes at the language and cultural center, he learned about Costa Rican history and literature. Yet, he was very critical of what he perceived was a lack of Costa Rican patriotism. Robert's experience of patriotism for his home country was different from what he perceived was a lack of Costa Rican patriotism. Many Costa Ricans are proud that the country no longer has an army. However, Robert argued that independence was just handed to Costa Rica because other Central American countries such as Guatemala and Mexico fought the war on independence. He also stated that through discussions with his students, he found that they did not understand and revere some of the Costa Rican historical figures such as Juan Santamaria, the national war hero who died for his country when Costa Rica had an army. These aspects

bothered him and he addressed these concerns by bringing them up as topics of discussion in class.

Robert was the only teacher participant who mentioned learning about Costa Rican history. Delving into the historical background of the country helps prepare a teacher, especially an outsider, to be critically engaged in the community. Learning about the historical, cultural and political background of the country in which NESTs work is part of developing their savoir s'engager (Byram, 1997). Robert also raised this topic in his classroom. However, instead of using the topic as a point of departure for a fruitful conversation, he explained that he was surprised that the students did not know some aspects of Costa Rica's political history or that others responded without appreciation for Juan Santamaria being a Costa Rican martyr. In his explanations of classroom discussions, he shared that this disappointed him as someone who was proud of U.S. war heroes. Yet, these and other classroom discussions led him to understand that Costa Ricans' patriotism was manifested in different ways. He found that the seven provinces show cohesiveness among themselves, and that there is a love for local communities that ties Costa Ricans together. It was through this reflection that Robert moved through a deeper understanding of patriotism and a critical consciousness that one's sense of patriotism could be different and yet still recognizable. His perception of Costa Rican patriotism developed as he discussed it over the interview time period. This development showed a growth in savoir s'engager as he was able to critically analyze how Costa Ricans view community and solidarity. Rather than looking down on them for their perspectives on Juan Santamaria, he grew to reframe his understanding of their patriotism as a sense of collectivism.

The knowledge of being a privileged guest in another culture is an important recognition for the NEST to have (Snow & Campbell, 2017), particularly when the NEST is from a country

of privilege like the U.S. Robert learned from his TEFL course instructors not to be entitled. He shared that many NESTs come to Costa Rica and expect the students to conform to their ways of thinking and behaving, and felt that was a problem. Similarly, when he saw a need for some cultural changes in Costa Rica, he believed that because he was not from Costa Rica that it was not his place to "start a revolution." He understood he was a guest in Costa Rica and therefore should not overstep boundaries. It is necessary for intercultural NESTs to approach their host community with respect and curiosity, and not to assume that their way is the best way of doing something (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013). Robert's argument that Latin American students should not be expected to conform to the teacher and his developing notion of patriotism was a critical reflection on being an outsider in a new culture.

Caroline spoke about how her experience in Costa Rica as a white U.S. American shaped her understanding of her privilege. She recognized that she was afforded certain privileges due to the color of her skin and that her husband, who has darker colored skin, was racially profiled. Because of her experiences of privilege, in contrast to those of her husband, she learned to critique and challenge the mindset that afforded her certain privileges. Caroline argued that there was a culture "on the top" that was calling the shots, implying that the racial group that was in the majority, namely those who are white or have lighter colored skin, have privileges over those who have darker colored skin. She shared that her husband was racially profiled in Costa Rica which emphasized that racism and light skin privilege exist in Costa Rica. She acknowledged that she knew this to be true in the U.S. and shared her frustration with aspects of her own culture that she discovered by living in Costa Rica.

It was the juxtaposition of life in Costa Rica that made her recognize and share her experience and understanding of white privilege with family and friends. This development in

understanding of privilege indicated that Caroline had been developing savoir s'engager, as she critiqued the injustice of one racial group having control over others. Freire (1999) noted that people must be critical of the world around them. Becoming aware of power imbalances between groups of people and illustrating those differences shows a critical interculturality that is necessary in English foreign language education (Granados-Beltrán, 2016). Additionally, as guests in a new country, Snow and Campbell (2017) argued that NESTs who view the host community positively and explore the common beliefs and values of the host culture are better able to adapt to life there. As the teachers learned more about common Costa Rican beliefs and values, they reframed their own ways of thinking and behaving, and this eased their transition to Costa Rica.

Teachers' Proficiency in Spanish

The NESTs' varying levels of Spanish speaking skills either frustrated or assisted their transition to Costa Rica. Teachers had the opportunity to take free Spanish classes at the language and cultural center. All of the teachers spoke some Spanish and stated that they were interested in improving those skills through those classes. Maryanne and Calista reported that they did not speak Spanish, but upon further discussion exemplified that they knew some Spanish and had taken a class at the language and cultural center. They both shared an interest in learning Spanish to subsist in Costa Rica, and to avoid taxi drivers or merchants taking advantage of them by charging them extra for goods and services. Robert argued that it was a shame when NESTs came to Costa Rica and left without having learned Spanish. To him and many other teachers, it was important to speak Spanish outside the classroom. An important part of a NESTs' transition to a new country is learning to speak the language (Snow & Campbell, 2017).

Robert argued that learning Spanish helped him improve his critical thinking skills. When asked what he valued most about language education, Robert responded that it was to become literate and referenced Paulo Freire's notion of concienscietization. For him, becoming conscious through an additional language was a way to view the world with a new set of eyes or soul. For Robert, education was not just about receiving grades, and he believed that learning a language in a formal setting was a way in which he could develop consciousness. Even though he learned Spanish from his mother as a child, Robert argued that as he studied it more deeply and in a formal setting as an adult, he became conscious in Spanish. He also learned a new variety of Spanish, since his mother taught him Mexican Spanish. He shared that the experience of developing his Spanish speaking skills inherently develops a Spanish consciousness that is different from his English consciousness. This demonstrated an appreciation for critical pedagogy in language education. Robert expressed an understanding that language education is more than translation or learning new words, but that language had the power to make one more conscious of the world around them. Referencing Paulo Freire showed that he was familiar with and interested in critical consciousness in education. He also stated explicitly that he was developing critical thinking skills as he developed Spanish, which is an example of savoir s'engager. The way that he assessed Costa Rica and language education exemplified a growth in intercultural competence.

Learning Spanish was not only necessary to subsist in Costa Rica but to meet Ticos. Timothy noted that his interest in learning Spanish was not only to help him get around Costa Rica, but to talk to Costa Ricans and build friendships in Costa Rica without relying on people to speak in his language. His Costa Rican partner spoke English to him, but not all her family members spoke English. He said, "If I really want to get to know the culture and if I really want

to make Tico friends, I'm going to have to learn Spanish. And I don't want to have to rely on them to speak to me in English." Being able to speak to them in their language was a big motivating factor for Timothy to improve his Spanish speaking skills. He also shared that when he was with his students outside of the classroom that they would mostly speak in English, but that as he improved in Spanish, he would likely speak more in Spanish with them outside the classroom.

This effort and desire to speak Spanish to connect with students, friends and his partner's family showed that some of Timothy's interests in learning Spanish was to build relationships. While building Spanish speaking skills, he was also building intercultural competence through his relationships with Costa Ricans. The desire to build relationships rather than just make acquaintances in a new community exemplifies savoir être (Sercu, 2005) by having the open attitude to learn more about their host community. Additionally, NESTs who make an effort to learn the language of the host community show that they do not expect the host community to learn English, and they demonstrate an appreciation for the host language. NESTs should not just be ambassadors of English education, but of language education (Snow & Campbell, 2017). The desire to improve their Spanish in order to connect with Costa Ricans and learn more about their culture shows the NESTs' commitment to developing intercultural communicative competence and to being good guests in a new country.

Relationships in the Community

Building relationships in the local community helps NESTs learn more about the culture (Arriaza & Wagner, 2012) and how to behave appropriately in intercultural spaces (Snow & Campbell, 2017). All of the teachers except for Calista spoke about developing relationships with Ticos in Heredia. Timothy and Caroline had Costa Ricans partners and spoke about how those relationships, as well as those with their partners' families, helped them learn about Costa

Rica. Caroline shared that her husband, his family and her understanding of their cultural background shaped her response to Costa Ricans, particularly her students. She understood that her husband's beliefs were deeply embedded in his Catholic cultural upbringing. Her awareness of cultural worldviews allowed her to negotiate the differences in opinion between them. This understanding of their differences helped her understand her students better and respect their opinions when they were different from her opinions.

Timothy's and Caroline's relationships with their partners and their families allowed them to develop their savoir faire by helping them learn more about Costa Rican culture by being an intimate part of it. Caroline exemplified her growing savoirs by the way that she recognized that her husband's opinions were connected to his sociocultural identity and upbringing. When she noted that they had different values, she rooted them in both her cultural upbringing as well as his. She would not dismiss his ideas and beliefs, but contextualize them. She also shared that she transferred that skill to the classroom. Her students thus benefited from her ability to contextualize people's worldviews within their unique sociocultural identity and life experiences.

Caroline also learned about Costa Rican culture from her neighbors who she claimed were like family to her and her husband. In their time together, the neighbors taught Caroline about Costa Rican norms and inadvertently taught her ways to improve her teaching style by the way that they learned and understood English. Veronica similarly noted that her Costa Rican friends shaped her experience in Costa Rica as they taught her Spanish and Costa Rica customs. They were also quite concerned for her safety and traveling around by herself. They told her when and where it was safe to go out for entertainment. Developing relationships that are more than superficial encounters strengthens one's intercultural competence (Sercu, 2005). Therefore, it was apparent that this close relationship with her neighbors helped Caroline adapt to Costa

Rica. Although she stated that it was difficult for her to build relationships with Ticos, she continued to try. In order to integrate into the community, most of the NESTs shared their lives with people there, rather than just simply maintain friendships with other NESTs.

Both Timothy and Maryanne had a unique development of savoir faire during their homestays. A homestay is an arranged, prolonged accommodation for a foreign visitor to stay with a local family and learn about the local culture. It is often a paid accommodation, as it was for Timothy and Maryanne. The goal of a homestay is for the visitor to spend time immersed in the culture by learning from the family with whom they live. During their TEFL course, Maryanne and Timothy spent their whole month living with and learning from a Costa Rican family. They both shared that they stayed connected with these families after they moved out and had fond memories of their time adjusting to Costa Rica under their guidance. Timothy's reflections on his host family were limited to the meals that they provided for him, but he shared that he still visited with the family. Maryanne described in more detail of her time with the host family. Even though she had vacationed in Costa Rica many times prior to moving there, Maryanne still had a lot to learn about Costa Rican culture and to view the country from the perspective of someone who worked there. Two of the women she lived with spoke English, which helped her learn about Costa Rica in her own language. Yet, their father only spoke Spanish, so she learned some Spanish from him. This family planned adventures for Maryanne to see the sites around in and around the Central Valley and brought her to parts of Costa Rica she had never known about before, nor never thought to visit on her prior vacations.

Maryanne and Timothy's discussions of their time with their host families show differing levels of savoir faire. Even though Maryanne stated that she did not speak Spanish, her descriptions of the interchanges between her family in Spanish and English show that she was

attempting to learn their language and share hers with them. By positioning herself in intercultural contexts to learn about Costa Rican norms and practices, she exercised her skills and ability to enter into an intercultural classroom, and to do so with respect for her students. Timothy similarly showed his ability to strengthen his savoir faire. He shared that not only did he spend time with a host family, but he also spent time with his partner's family, who are Ticos. His time with both Costa Rican families enriched his understanding of Costa Rica and Costa Rican culture. Putting themselves in the position to live with Costa Rican families showed that Maryanne and Timothy had savoir être, and their desire to practice Spanish with them savoir faire. They shared their culture with the Costa Rican families as well, which enriched the cultural exchange and showed their willingness to build relationships with them.

TEFL Certificate Program Support

Four of the five teachers who received their TEFL certificate course from TEFL School 1 took those classes in person, in Costa Rica in a city near Heredia, where the language and cultural center is located. They each gave positive reviews of their intensive experience taking classes there and the relationships they built with fellow pre-service teachers and the instructors. In addition to teaching grammar and instructional techniques, the TEFL School 1 and TEFL School 2 taught the teachers how to behave appropriately in Costa Rica. The NESTs were taught how to navigate the job market under Costa Rica's notion of professionalism, how to appropriately understand Costa Rica's concept of personal space and some basic understanding of communication norms. Each of the teachers had to conduct practicum hours which allowed them to put what they learned during their course into practice. The teachers practiced their teaching skills and were observed by their instructors and senior teachers while they instructed local students who received the courses free of charge. This additional practice in a Costa Rican classroom not only prepared them for TEFL, it also prepared them specifically for a Costa Rican

classroom. Calista was the only teacher who obtained her TEFL certificate online, outside of Costa Rica. She said that one of the only things missing from her course was information about teaching specifically in Costa Rica and learning what was culturally appropriate.

The efficacy of these TEFL School instructors to reach the teacher participants seems to be embedded in the relationships they built with them as pre-service teachers. At TEFL School 1, the instructors were Mark and Jessica (pseudonyms are used throughout), and at TEFL School 2, the main instructor was Karen. These three instructors (originally from the U.S. and Canada) have lived and taught in Costa Rica for 10 to 15 years. All of the teacher participants who attended those schools in person reported that the instructors were incredibly supportive, and that they helped them understand TEFL and how to transition to Costa Rica. The four teachers who took the TEFL class in Costa Rica with TEFL School 1 spoke highly of Mark and Jessica and noted those instructors were kept in high regard in the TEFL community and in the Central Valley. Robert fondly recalled the day when Mark allowed him to relax with a beer as he finished his work for the day during the course. The two continued to talk, and a trusting relationship was built. This moment stuck with Robert as a teacher, because he learned that a teacher should be approachable to their students and someone they could look to for guidance.

Caroline shared that she related well with Jessica, who understood her experience as a NEST and a mother in Costa Rica. It was through that instructor that Caroline learned to navigate living in Costa Rica and becoming a mother in Costa Rica. She reported that they were still friends and that relationship helped her personally and professionally. Veronica also shared that even a year after she completed her TEFL certificate, Karen from TEFL School 2 sent her messages to check in with her and see how teaching was going. Maryanne said that the instructors gave constructive feedback and helped her be a better teacher. The positive reviews

and accolades that the teacher participants heard about their instructors built their confidence in their abilities to prepare them for TEFL. However, it was really the positive interactions and relationships with their TEFL instructors that left a lasting impression on the NESTs. The trust that they had in their instructors, as well as the ongoing support, modeled for the teachers how to be a guide for their own students.

As they transitioned to a new cultural space, the teachers relied on various people to develop their intercultural competence. Those that did not reference many relationships with Ticos might have limited their ability to develop savoirs and savoir faire. Calista was the only teacher that attested to not developing relationships with Costa Ricans, however, she noted that she felt close to some of her students and learned about Costa Rican customs from her students. Many teachers reported that they learned about Costa Rica from other English speaking people, such as their TEFL certificate instructors. While those informants helped them learn about Costa Rica, they had limited perspectives on the cultural experience of Costa Rica from the native perspective, despite having spent more than a decade in the country. As Robert noted, Costa Rica would never truly be his home and that was the same for the TEFL certificate instructors. Similarly, native English speakers who have immigrated to Costa Rica will always have their specific sociocultural identities and worldviews which create social distance between themselves and Costa Ricans (Arriaza & Wagner, 2012). Therefore, the relationships and experiences with Costa Ricans helped broaden the teacher participants' perspectives of Costa Rica and cultures within Costa Rica.

U.S. American influence in Costa Rica

Reflecting on the presence and influence of one's own culture is a component of savoir s'engager (Agudelo, 2007). As NESTs develop savoir s'engager, they learn to critique the presence and actions of their own culture as well as others (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002).

It was apparent in the NESTs' discussions of Costa Rica, that there was an impressionable influence from the U.S., and therefore some teachers made an effort to explore what they deemed "authentic" events and places in Costa Rica. Timothy's partner exposed him to parts of Costa Rica that he felt were more authentically Costa Rican, like the markets and football games, as opposed to the events or practices which were becoming Americanized, like going to Walmart. He argued that the introduction of Walmart, tax free zones and many fast food restaurants made Costa Rica Americanized. Some foreigners to Costa Rica, like NESTs or tourists, would spend most of their time and money in U.S. American fast food restaurants and beach resorts. Therefore, having a Costa Rican partner helped him find parts of Costa Rica that were less influenced by the U.S.

What Timothy referred to as the tax free zones are the areas in Costa Rica where local and international corporations conduct business without having to pay taxes. Corporations in these zones benefit from the Costa Rican Free Trade Zone Regime in order to export or re-export goods and services without paying sales, consumer and importation taxes and paying no or reduced income taxes (Vargas-Winiker, 2016). Timothy's partner taught him that while the presence of large corporations in these tax-free zones brought many jobs to Costa Rica, many Costa Ricans also felt that they were also creating an unwanted Americanized influence on the country. Timothy felt that it was sad that Costa Rica was losing its culture to U.S. American influence. During the discussion of the tax free zones, he related how large corporations brought many jobs to Costa Rica which often required employees to be proficient in English. However, many Costa Ricans saw these organizations as shaping Costa Rican culture to be more like the U.S. Timothy's critique of this influence exemplified his development of savoir s'engager. He understood that the dominance of a country like the U.S. in Costa Rica was a danger to Costa

Rican culture. His critical analysis over the U.S. American influence was connected to critical assessments made by Costa Ricans like Solano Campos.

Solano Campos (2012, 2014) discussed the power U.S. American culture had on the lives of Costa Ricans. As she indicated, her elementary school was named after the U.S. and found that U.S. American Standard English was promoted in schools over other English varieties, particularly the variety spoken by many Costa Ricans in the eastern province of Limón. The U.S. was often glamorized in Costa Rica as a culture to emulate, and speaking Standard English was a way to do that. It was quite apparent with the jobs available at U.S. American corporations in the tax free zones that speaking English was the way to obtain a higher paying job. The competition there for employment, as well as promotions, depend on one's proficiency in English.

Robert and Maryanne reflected on the discernible U.S. American influence in Costa Rica. Robert was proud and patriotic of his home country, yet still also recognized the U.S. American and European influences on Costa Rica. He argued that parts of Costa Rican society are modeled on Europe, but that these aspects of society were only accessible to the wealthy Costa Ricans. He attested that the native Costa Rican population, in particular, did not have access to the wealthy homes, schools, resorts and malls influenced by Europe and the U.S. The recognition of the remnants of colonialism shows a critical understanding of Latin American society (Granados-Beltrán, 2016). While Robert did not directly connect his reflection of European and U.S. American influences to the current national promotion of English, he noted that students paid a lot of money to take English classes to further their careers, and that the low-income mothers in the Puertas Abiertas program needed the English speaking skills to pull themselves out of poverty.

Maryanne found parts of Costa Rica to be reminiscent of the U.S. and stated that to share her culture with her Tico host family, she took them to Playa del Coco, a beach town on the western coast of Costa Rica. She deemed this beach an "American side of Costa Rica." According to Maryanne, the reason this experience seemed like a cultural exchange was due to the fact that Playa del Coco had many U.S. Americans and Canadians living there. English was spoken in many businesses, hotels and restaurants in Playa del Coco, and the amenities at the resort where she stayed made her feel at home. She discussed that when she brought her host family to stay with her at a resort, they were surprised by the presence of a washing machine and dishwashing machine, which they had never before used. She felt that by showing her Tico family this side of Costa Rica and such luxuries that they could understand how she lived. While it was a gesture of hospitality and an opportunity to get to know more about her, the trip to Playa del Coco as a cultural exchange must be unpacked.

Unlike Robert's comment that Costa Rica was unfortunately influenced by U.S. American and European culture, and Timothy's concerns with the "Americanization" of Costa Rica, Maryanne expressed excitement that a town in Costa Rica was so similar to the U.S. that she always found someone to speak English to her. It was a comfort for her as she noted that many U.S. Americans and Canadians lived there. It is an expensive place to live, and is one of the parts of Costa Rica's culture so influenced by the U.S. and Canada that some Costa Ricans do not have access to it, just as Robert described. Granados-Beltrán (2016) argued that the age of modernity began to hide remnants of colonialism and the effects of coloniality. The access that wealthy U.S. Americans and Canadians have to Playa del Coco that many Costa Ricans do not, especially the indigenous Costa Ricans as Robert argued, supports Granados-Beltrán's point that aspects of colonialism still exist in Latin America. Timothy and Robert found this reality in

Costa Rica to be disappointing, however, Maryanne was happy to find similarities to her home in the U.S. Her reactions showed a less critical understanding of coloniality in Costa Rica and the effects the U.S. American influences had on Costa Ricans.

Discussion

As these six NESTs moved to Costa Rica, they learned to adapt to a new way of life. The theme here addresses the second research question that inquires how NESTs' perceptions of and adaptations to their host country shape their teaching practice, as well as the third question by addressing how NESTs perceive and respond to the influences of U.S. American culture in Costa Rica. The NESTs found support from fellow NESTs, other staff members at the language and cultural center, their students and their TEFL certificate program instructors. Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) promoted the idea that there is not just one best way of viewing and living life, and that an intercultural speaker seeks to understand other cultures. Some of the teachers recognized this and learned to adjust their ways of living and doing everyday tasks. The NESTs who were able to learn how people in their local community lived and worked, and acclimated to that lifestyle, became accustomed to their new community. Those who had started to learn Spanish and build relationships in the community, and not just with other foreigners, expressed a greater level of ease in their transition than those who had not, because they were developing their intercultural competence and intercultural communicative competence. From their reflections, the NESTs demonstrated varying levels of growth in intercultural competence by the ways in which they sought out intercultural experiences and opportunities to learn more, their attitudes toward Costa Rica, and their ability to adapt to a new country and community.

Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence was used to analyze the findings here. Each of the teachers showed ways in which they were developing the savoirs outlined by Byram to build their intercultural communicative competence. The teachers

exemplified that they had savoir être by being open to moving to Costa Rica, learning Spanish, developing relationships and participating in Costa Rican events. By reflecting on the differences between their own sociocultural identities and those of their students, and how their backgrounds might affect the way that they view and experience everything around them, critical educators develop intercultural competence (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Solano Campus, 2012). Additionally, those considerations strengthened the NESTs' savoirs. They showed their growth in savoir faire by learning what were the Costa Rican norms and by adhering to them so not to offend; by being less direct and aggressive in their manner of speech. The more that teachers learned Spanish and were able to compare it with English, as well as learn about Costa Rican values, beliefs and attitudes, the more they developed savoir comprendre which assisted in their acceptance of Costa Rican values, beliefs and attitudes. Finally, identifying and questioning the manner in which Costa Rica is shaped and changed by English and U.S. American influences shows a development in savoir s'engager. Each of the NESTs showed that they utilized various savoirs in order to positively transition to Costa Rica.

Nieto and Booth (2010) affirmed that NESTs that move to a new cultural community are shaped by that community. As they learn more about that community, they must develop the self-awareness to see how their own cultural background has shaped their way of thinking and behaving, and how their host community's cultures shapes the way they think and behave (Byram, 2008; Duff & Uchida, 1997). The teachers exhibited an awareness that they themselves and Costa Ricans think, act and behave in ways that are learned from their own cultural background. As the NESTs reflected on the meaning and manifestations of Costa Rican culture and their home cultures, they addressed concepts such as beliefs, values, communication styles,

worldviews and concepts of time. These concepts were couched in their experiences with Costa Rican people.

The NESTs reflected on the growing influence of U.S. American culture in Costa Rica, and their reviews of this phenomenon were mixed. Solano Campos (2014) attested that Costa Rica has a great admiration for U.S. American culture and English. Having critical awareness of the spread of English language education and the influences of English-dominant countries contributes to the disruption of inequalities between English-dominant countries and those who promote TEFL (Granados-Beltrán, 2016; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996). Maryanne appreciated that parts of Costa Rica seemed like her home, while Robert and Timothy critiqued the presence of U.S. American companies and the limited access Costa Ricans had to those entities. Their critiques signaled a critical consciousness of western and anglocentric influences that is necessary in the TEFL field. As Snow and Campbell (2017) mentioned, in many countries where TEFL is promoted, there are mixed feelings towards English-dominant countries such as the U.S., Canada and England. Therefore, it is necessary for NESTs to be aware of the complicated relationships between their host and home countries, and open to receiving criticisms regarding their home country.

Developing intercultural communicative competence means more than just learning to act appropriately in one's first language, but to also communicate and act appropriately in the target language (Yang, 2018). Robert and Caroline, who had spent two to three years in Costa Rica and were fluent in Spanish, expressed more comfortability navigating the country than the newer NESTs and could therefore focus on teaching. The teachers who had spent less than a year in Costa Rica and knew little Spanish expressed more difficulties transiting to Costa Rica and to TEFL. Snow and Campbell (2017) argued that speaking the local language in a new country

equips NESTs not only with an essential communication tool, but also with tools to build relationships and integrate into the host culture. They attested that not speaking the local language is one of the most common reasons NESTs feel alienated in a new country. Conversely, those who spoke Spanish proficiently reported having relationships with Latin Americans and a deeper understanding of cultural nuances and differences.

Positive relationships with local people in the host community help the NESTs transition and have a positive experience in the new country (Casanave, 2012; Snow & Campbell, 2017). Those that did not have relationships with Costa Ricans, spoke about how they spent time with their fellow NESTs or other foreigners to Costa Rica. While this helped them have a positive experience, some noted that they were hoping to build friendships with Costa Ricans and that had not happened yet. While they sometimes expressed frustration due to cultural differences, the NESTs all responded with a mostly positive outlook on their experiences in Costa Rica and at the language and cultural center. This center, composed of fellow teachers, administrators and staff, contributed to their transition to Costa Rica and to TEFL. The teachers who had deepened their understanding of their own culture through comparison of the similarities and differences between Costa Rican culture and their own culture, grew in savoir comprendre and were able to behave with respect and self-awareness in the country and their classroom.

Chapter 5
Findings and Discussion:
Teachers' perceptions of and interactions with their students

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there were multiple times when students helped their teachers learn about Costa Rica and adapt to the new cultures in Costa Rica. The teacher-student relationships and interactions impacted the NESTs as educators as well. In this chapter, I review the second of three themes that emerged from the data. I present and analyze how the teachers' perceived their students and how they interacted with them in and outside the language and cultural center. Each of the teachers had between 30 and 40 students they taught every week. When asked to describe their students, all of the teachers responded positively and were often smiling as they recalled certain moments in class or outside of class when students brightened their day or simply succeeded in their pursuit of learning English. The teachers had varying levels of interactions with their students; some believed that they should not interact with students outside of the language and cultural center, while others made an effort to hang out with their adult students in their free time. Nonetheless, they all strived to get to know each of their students to create lessons that were geared toward their needs and interests. In the TEFL School 1 resource book, the authors argue that teachers can build positive interactions with students by knowing their names, hobbies, background information about who they are and their personal goals (Anonymous 1, 2016). The teacher participants related many details about their students' personal lives, goals and interests. They each spoke extensively about certain students, referencing them by name and at times highlighting specific stories from their lives.

Getting to Know Each Other

Developing positive relationships with students involves getting to know them and their interests and motivations (Henry & Thorsen, 2018). As Robert and Timothy noted, the students at the language and cultural center were a diverse group. Understanding that not all students held

the same beliefs, interests, lifestyles and motivations is an aspect of a NEST growing in intercultural competence. This notion was encouraged at TEFL School 2. Part of their mission statement illustrates the need for TEFL teachers to find ways to get to know their students. They note,

> Good teachers offer a variety of activities in order to reach a variety of learning styles and maintain a classroom environment, which makes the students feel comfortable and eager to learn. The best teachers are the ones that take the time to get to know their students and make an effort to treat them like individuals; not just names on a roster...
>
> Each student is different from the last and the excitement of reaching them and helping them to learn something new is what keeps the passion for teaching alive. A good teacher has to love what they do in order to excel at it. Every new class you receive is like a new canvas, you have to first observe, understand, imagine and then begin to test the colors and in union with the students, begin to create a new work of art. (Anonymous 2, 2018).

As the mission statement suggests, students are not all the same, and teachers must get to know them personally; not view them simply as "names on a roster." Practices must be modified to fit each student and each class based on the students' expressed interests and passions. This TEFL school values the practice of getting to know students in order to treat them like individuals. Veronica obtained her TEFL certificate from this school, and exemplified a commitment to getting to know her students. This helped her know how to prepare lessons. She noted that her students would not directly tell her if they did not want to discuss a given topic. Therefore, she made an effort to find the topics of interest by listening to what they said during their practice activities and then incorporating them into another discussion during a later class. Additionally, the mission statement shared that each class is like a new work of art that requires

observations, understanding and imagination to begin a new piece. Pre-service teachers at this TEFL school, like Veronica, are taught to view their students as individuals and as agents in the creation of a lesson plan. Lesson plans could not just be recycled without being recreated. Veronica exemplified that she shared that viewpoint, and the other NESTs at the language and cultural center did as well.

Learning about students through their activities and assignments helps the teacher know how to prepare lessons for them in the future and help nurture their relationship. Learning more about students and developing positive relationships motivates foreign language learners (Henry & Thorsen, 2018). The NESTs demonstrated this assertion when they got to know their students in a variety of ways such as in-class activities and written assignments. At the language and cultural center, teachers were encouraged to get their students to speak in English as much as possible. Often that meant that students were invited to talk about themselves and their families or friends. The lesson plans they shared with me and the textbook they utilized in their courses provided multiple opportunities for students to share their interests and values with their teachers and their classmates. The activities and practice opportunities often invited students to share what they would do or how they would feel in various situations illustrating students' motivations, values and emotions. The teachers shared that this then influenced how they designed future lessons. For example, teachers included students' topics of interest in class discussions and avoided activities and games that did not align with students' interests or may have caused discomfort based on the teachers' perceptions of students' comfortability.

Addressing cultural stereotypes.

The NESTs shared that as they got to know their students in class, they also learned that students were excited to teach their teachers about Costa Rica. Maryanne shared that she learned

about Costa Rican culture from her students through their classroom discussions about stereotypes. Some of the textbooks used at the language and cultural center contained chapters that prompted conversations about stereotypes and cross-cultural situations. These chapters provided impetus for the students to discuss certain stereotypes they had heard about people from other cultures. Both Calista and Maryanne invited their students to talk about the stereotypes they had learned about U.S. Americans, and both reported that students were hesitant to say anything negative about U.S. Americans, fearful that they would offend their U.S. American teachers. This was indicative of the cultural practice of avoiding conflict and tension, discussed further in a later section, and the respect that most of the teachers expressed they felt from their Costa Rican and other Latin American students. Yet, they were happy to discuss the stereotypes that the teachers learned about Costa Ricans.

When Maryanne began to describe some of the things she felt were stereotypes of Costa Ricans (e.g. dress and dental care), her students then taught her to dispel those stereotypes about Costa Ricans. She did not understand why Costa Ricans brushed their teeth frequently, to which they shared that they were taught to brush after every meal. When she asked about women's fashion, she inquired why women wear warm boots but small shirts. Her students explained that they wore what was comfortable to them and what prepared them for the weather. That lesson challenged Maryanne to view some common Costa Rican behaviors from a new perspective that was less critical and judgemental of the people she perceived in Costa Rica. Maryanne similarly did not want to claim her own experiences and behaviors as a U.S. American as universal experiences and behaviors of all U.S. Americans. She warned her students that what they saw on television did not represent all U.S. Americans, and that her beliefs and behavior represented

only one example of U.S. American beliefs and behaviors to dispel the notion that U.S. American beliefs and behaviors are universal.

These textbook chapters about culture and stereotypes set the students and teacher up to strengthen their savoirs and savoir comprendre about each other's cultures. It was a great opportunity, if entered into respectfully, for teachers to learn more about the students' beliefs and perspectives and for students' to learn more about their fellow classmates and teacher. Maryanne was able to share about her culture and ensured that students did not generalize her experience for all U.S. Americans. In return, she learned not to generalize or stereotype the Costa Rican behaviors and styles that she observed. It required that everyone in the classroom have the open attitude and respectful curiosity described as savoir être, to delve more deeply into cross cultural differences. An important part of developing intercultural competence for both teachers and students is to address and overcome stereotypes about people who are different (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002). Through these discussion, Maryanne and her students developed intercultural competence by letting go of stereotypes. The classroom is a prime spot for teachers to learn not just about their students, but also to dispel certain myths or stereotypes they gather, as well as learn about Costa Rican culture through their students' lens.

Getting to know each other outside of class periods.

Henry and Thorsen (2018) shared that interactions between teachers and students where they share similar thoughts, feelings and ways of doing, increase the positive sentiments of warmth between them. Interacting with students outside the class period and finding ways to connect with them came easily for some of the NESTs. There were opportunities for students to interact with their teacher outside of class time, but still within the language and cultural center. Classes that lasted three hours had a mid-point break, and Veronica, Maryanne and Robert

shared that some of their students made an effort to talk to their teachers during that time. Some students came to class early knowing that the teacher would be there to talk with them. In those moments, the relationships grew as students got extra time with their teachers, and they learned more about their personal lives. Veronica, Robert and Caroline shared their experiences of students using time before and after class, as well as break time, to socialize with their teacher. Maryanne said that some of her students liked to arrive early to class to get to know their teacher and to teach her Spanish. She also participated in intercambios with other English students at the school. She claimed that she only knew how to count to 20 and the names of the days of the week. Therefore, when she met students for intercambios she mostly spoke in English with them, encouraging their extra practice and building their confidence. This interest of the students to spend time with their teachers showed that they were looking for extra time to get to know them or practice English. Increasing the amount of positive interactions between teachers and students leads to stronger relationships (Henry & Thorsen, 2018). The NESTs that talked with students outside of class built trust, deepened their understanding of students' lives and were viewed as more approachable and friendly.

The NESTs learned more about their students outside of the classroom through WhatsApp, the free texting application that allows users to send free international texts. Teachers used it to send reminders of upcoming tests and assignments or to send class notes to a student who missed a class. Timothy shared that WhatsApp texting provided another outlet for him to get to know his students. He shared that they would not always text strictly about course related topics and therefore, he was able to get to know students further through those messages. Maryanne also discussed the advantages of staying connected to students through WhatsApp, as they relied on their teacher and classmates to catch up on what they missed. Maryanne stated that

through these messages, she learned more about her students as they chatted casually with one another, and she encouraged them to use English when texting in the group. She shared that this not only gave them extra practice, but also built class solidarity and helped develop positive interactions even outside of class.

Snow and Campbell (2017) argued that as teachers contemplate what their relationships with their students might look like, they must learn the local norms regarding teacher-student relationships. Desiring to learn more about their teachers and spend time with their teachers was a message from students that it was appropriate to develop some sort of relationship with teachers outside of the classroom. At the very least, they were looking to have positive and warm interactions with their teachers. Such interactions that develop meaningful relationships are essential to foreign language learning. English language learners who feel welcomed and accepted are more likely to persist in studying the language (Schwarzer, 2009). This is why it was important for the NESTs to be open to spending those extra moments with students and to create a positive community among all students.

The language and cultural center encouraged teachers to celebrate the students' completion of level by going out with them to a meal at a restaurant or a bar, if all the students were of age and comfortable with such a celebration. Caroline noted that in one such outing with her students, they ran into a group of native English speaking students studying Spanish who were studying abroad in Costa Rica. The English students were excited to practice their English and found that the students who were studying Spanish did not have as strong a level of Spanish as they did in English. This interaction gave them confidence and made them excited to keep learning English. As Cummins (1979) argued, positive interactions with English speakers motivate ELLs to continue using English. It also encouraged Caroline to find more opportunities

to connect her Latin American students to U.S. Americans. She was able to observe them as they interacted with strangers in their target language and understand how they managed their fears and mistakes. She was also able to give further commendations to her students as they practiced while learning how they behave as people outside of the TEFL classroom. Most of the other NESTs spoke positively about celebrating their students' achievements as well, sharing that they have opportunities to speak to their students in a relaxed environment. Through their lesson plans, NESTs created opportunities to get to know their students inside and outside of the class period. They opened themselves up for students to get to know them, and the NESTs also learned more about Costa Rica through structured activities or informal conversations with their students. Whether these teacher-student interactions occurred in the classroom or during external social events, the NESTs used these interactions to shape their teaching practice by appealing to students' interests.

Relating to Students

By finding ways to relate to students, NESTs build intercultural knowledge, attitudes and skills that better their teaching practice (Nieto & Booth, 2010). The NESTs found that they had many things in common with their students, and all of the NESTs reported that they could relate to their students in some way. Some of the students were parents, and many worked long hours to provide for their family. Calista, Maryanne and Caroline all shared that they could relate to their students' experiences of working long hours, and so they understood if students were occasionally tardy or had to miss class. They also argued that they accepted late work from many students because they understood that English classes were not the most important thing in their students' lives.

One way that teachers reported relating to students was in the way that they would just like to hang out and have fun. Caroline stated that she related to her younger students because

they liked to joke around and have fun. The ability to connect with their students through levity helped the teachers relate to their students, ease their stresses and bring about a more welcoming classroom environment. Caroline noted that she related to students who just liked to relax and hang out with friends. She said that she and some of her students would connect about watching the same television show, and they enjoyed talking about the unfolding plot. This and other shared interests between teachers and students allowed them to talk to one another casually before and after class and increased the positive interactions between them.

As mothers, Maryanne and Caroline both stated that they related to their students who were parents because they too wanted a better life for their children. Caroline reported that being a mother helped her relate to students even if they were not parents. She related to those who were parents and found ways to talk about her daughter and their children with them. If the students did not have children, she imagined how their parents felt about them and this made her sympathetic to each student. She included pictures of her daughter in her lesson presentations and invited them to ask questions about her family and her life. In this way, she opened herself up to students so they could get to know her. Maryanne also related to students who were parents because she knew that they were working hard to provide for their family. While the other four NESTs were not parents, they related to hard working parents who just wanted to advance their careers.

All of the NESTs shared that their experiences as a student helped them relate to their own students. Maryanne and Calista were excited to take Spanish classes with the student teacher who had been conducting her practicum teaching at the language and cultural center. According to Maryanne, that experience as a Spanish student made her more understanding of her students' needs. After listening to a recording of a conversation in Spanish, she learned how

difficult it was to comprehend the target language after hearing the conversation just once. Therefore, she began to slow down and repeat herself more in class, and play audio clips several times for her English students. She also realized the importance of teaching students what is most relevant to their daily lives. As a beginner level Spanish student in a Spanish-speaking country, what was most relevant to her was how to ask for food at the market and to make basic transactions in other places around the city. This helped her as a teacher realize that she should teach the concepts, words and grammar that the students most wanted or needed to learn in their everyday lives. Timothy also related to students in their pursuit of language learning. He felt that as a Spanish student, he struggled with pronunciation and understanding Spanish teachers who spoke too quickly. He related to the students who felt that learning an additional language was something they had to do to accomplish a goal. Even though he and his students wanted to learn a new language for different reasons, he related to the fact that it was also a necessary step to reach professional and personal goals.

In order to relate to her students and demonstrate the struggle of making oral presentations, Maryanne gave short Spanish presentations to her students. She stated that she did so to demonstrate that it was okay to make mistakes, mispronounce words and to laugh at herself. She believed that this encouraged them to keep showing up to class, to make mistakes and to keep trying. Calista related to students who struggled to write in English by sharing a very telling story about getting a paper returned from a former French teacher that was filled with red corrective marks. She shared how that red filled paper made her want to quit French. Keeping this memory in the forefront of her mind as she graded a student's paper that began to fill with red corrective marks, Calista recalled her negative experience as a French student and did not

give back the student's paper the same way that her French teacher had. Instead, Calista spoke with the student about a few of her sentences and provided her with guidance to rewrite them.

Because Calista knew the student and her abilities, she was able to guide her through some examples that were in her ZPD so that the student could see with confidence that she could rewrite the paper. Calista took extra time and attention to go over the grammar with the student so they could correct the mistakes together. Calista shared that when the student rewrote the paper, there were much fewer mistakes. When the student received her revised paper with a passing grade, she was excited, not discouraged and had learned the grammar points. Calista's poignant negative experience of being a language student taught her how to avoid crushing the hopes and spirit of another language student. The extra time Calista took to be with the student and to explain the grammar built trust between the two of them and showed the student that her teacher cared about her and her development in English.

Ellis (2013) argued that structured language learning experiences (SLLE) help a teacher empathize with the students' experiences of learning a language. The descriptions above all show that the NESTs were able to draw from their previous language learning experiences. TEFL School 1 created a short SLLE for their students as they prepare to be language teachers. Timothy shared that during his TEFL certificate program, the instructor led a beginner level language class solely in Czech so that the pre-service teachers could experience a lesson as an introductory level student immersed in a new language. Timothy shared that it was an eye-opening experience which led him to understand how his introductory level students felt hearing English. Caroline also shared that taking Spanish classes at the language and cultural center introduced her to different ways of teaching a language. Seeing the foreign language classroom through the eyes of a student helps the foreign language teacher learn methods and strategies that

they might not have learned before (Ellis, 2013). Moreover, just as Casanave (2012) shared, being a language student reminds the teacher how difficult it can be and how important it is for the teacher to keep the learning process engaging.

Engaging Students

In education, learners internalize new information and practices in their social environment (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). That social environment in the language and cultural center included classmates and the NESTs who felt that the TEFL classroom should be full of fun and games. While some TEFL teachers feel pressure to make every class fun and introduce exciting games, it is more important to keep the students engaged (Snow & Campbell, 2017). The more that the NESTs could relate to their students and uncover their interests, the easier it was to engage them in the classroom. Most of the NESTs argued that English classes should be fun and emphasized the importance of making lessons interesting for students. Maryanne described many activities where the focus of the lesson was incorporated through games or other activities of pretend. She held classes where students pretended to be employees of a restaurant, games where students would pretend that there was a crime and they had to figure out who committed it, or a negotiation of who would have the best survival skills on a deserted island. These opportunities to practice English, she shared, enlivened the students and were fun for them. Regarding the time and energy she spent trying to engage her students Maryanne stated, "Anything to get them talking and laughing." As she described the way that such activities played out in the classroom, she demonstrated that she pulled information that students shared with her in previous classes. She made cultural references her students taught her which further engaged them and made class interesting for them. Maryanne also knew that students could lose focus and get distracted in class, so she was careful to keep students consistently engaged and to gently bring their focus back to the classroom when necessary.

Many of the teachers reported that they had learned how to adapt lesson plans because of the students' expressed interests or nonverbal expressions of boredom or confusion. Veronica said that she would "know what's gonna flop" when preparing lessons for her classes because she had learned so much about them and their interests. However, it seemed that it was more complicated than knowing something would flop. Accurately predicting how a group of students might receive a conversation topic or activity comes from practice and being able to read the students' body language. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the NESTs learned that communication in Costa Rica was sometimes different than what they were used to in their cultural background. They discovered some nonverbal clues that helped them adapt in the classroom. Robert and Timothy reported that they could tell when students were losing interest by the way that they would slouch and look out the window. Caroline learned how to read students' eyes if they did not understand a lesson, but verbally said that they did. She said that there was something in their eyes that let her know they did not really understand certain grammar points and vocabulary. She also knew there might be confusion by the questions they asked. She would then adapt on the spot to devote extra time to an activity or add a new activity at the last minute.

All the teacher participants discussed the importance of giving students choices and letting them decide how to direct the class. Timothy shared that the students helped him plan lessons because they told him what they would like to do with their time together. Timothy attributed their comfortability in requesting certain activities to the trust he had built with them outside of class time. By choosing certain activities and games, the students introduced their classmates and Timothy to more ways to practice English. Timothy allowed it and believed that it strengthened their interest in coming to class.

Giving students choices in their learning is an example of teachers exercising intercultural competence. Teachers must be flexible in their methodology to allow students choice, and they must understand their educational and cultural needs to connect their choices to what will also be on the test (Kramsch, 2004). Each of the teachers shared that increasing student talk time was important, and to do so they tried to make conversations interesting to students. However, they also had to complete tests and finish their textbooks within a given time. Many students needed to leave the language and cultural center with a certificate of advancement in English for their jobs. Therefore, the teachers' efforts to increase the student talk time, provide choice in activities and ensure that the students were prepared for their tests showed their intercultural maneuvering to meet students' needs and interests.

Caroline and Veronica also spoke about building students' confidence to keep them engaged. Students disengaged when they started to lose confidence in themselves. Caroline stated that one of the goals of Study Hall was to build their confidence in the students. Those who went to Study Hall usually had to go because they were falling behind in class and this could cause them to lose confidence. Therefore, building their confidence as well as their grammar skills was important. Without the confidence to practice, students became disengaged and stopped pursuing English. Therefore, building confidence was another strategy the NESTs used to engage failing students. The efforts that the NESTs made to engage students demonstrated their understanding that the language learning process needed to be interesting. As Farrell (2014) argued, while there are number of strategies to keep students interested in learning English, teachers needed to find ways that work for them. He argued that some engaging activities can help deepen relationships between teachers and students. The NESTs in this study found ways to keep students interested while building trust and boosting confidence.

Creating a Family or Team Environment

Schwarzer (2009) attested that the language classroom should be a safe and supportive community for the language learners. It is up to the teachers then, to create an environment where students can feel safe making mistakes as they try out their new language. Four of the NESTs (Veronica, Calista, Robert and Caroline) supported this claim by reporting that they had success in their classes when they cultivated a family or team environment. Caroline attested, "I think you really need to set up sort of like a family culture in a classroom in order to have true gains with a language." Caroline shared that students appreciated when teachers were flexible and showed that they cared for their students. This increased students' motivation and willingness to work hard in their class. While the other two teachers did not use the word "family," they shared that a safe and supportive environment helped students learn.

The TEFL School 1 resource book also advocated for the development of a team-like community among the teacher and students (Anonymous 1, 2016). The teachers who taught the intensive classes (those that meet four times a week) reported feeling a sense of family and closeness with their students that they did not feel with their Saturday classes, who met just once a week. Many of the teachers reported that they had a harder time creating such an environment with their once-a-week "Saturday students," who would not open up to NESTs or classmates as easily as students who meet two or four times a week for English class. Therefore, the times when the "Saturday students" would remain in the classroom to talk to their teachers during break or after class were essential moments for the teachers to get to know them further and build trust.

While some of the teachers shared that they would not be friends with their students, all the teachers demonstrated ways that they tried to create a community among their students, and ways that trust and positive relations grew between them. Maryanne generously cooked for and

with students. To ease anxieties on quiz day, she brought baked goods. In every level of the English classes, there was a textbook chapter about food, which invited the teachers to spend the class period in the kitchen of the language and cultural center. Maryanne noted that she never let an opportunity pass to cook with her students and teach them a new recipe. She reported that the students loved it and were excited by that chapter because they learned to cook in addition to developing English language skills and vocabulary. As Farrell (2014) found, efforts to reduce anxieties and appeal to students' interests are strategies that can foster positive teacher-student relationships. Maryanne was able to do just that.

Maryanne, who was known as the cupcake lady, made an effort to connect with students that were not in her classes. She shared that many students knew who she was because she frequently baked and brought cupcakes to the language and cultural center. Similar to Calista, Maryanne did not engage with students on a personal level outside of the language and cultural center. These were just some of the ways that Maryanne built positive interactions and relationships with students without going out to the bar with them or engaging in one-on-one relationships. She was therefore able to learn more about the students at the language and cultural center. Farrell (2014) noted that developing relationships with students is important, but can also be emotionally draining. He argued that some teachers can develop trusting and caring relationships with students while setting boundaries to take care of themselves. By developing positive relationships while setting boundaries with their students, Calista and Maryanne were able to learn more about their students and had many positive interactions with them. This helped them adequately prepare their lesson plans and assessments while still preserving their mental health and avoiding burnout. Farrell (2014) noted that constant interaction with students can lead to teachers' burning out- feeling depleted due to over-expenditure of mental and physical energy.

The boundaries that these teachers set are ways in which teachers can maintain their energy and focus for teaching.

All the NESTs discussed that building trust and respect in the classroom was important for maintaining a family or team environment. This again supports Farrell's (2014) argument for English foreign language teachers to build a trusting and caring environment for their students. Robert argued that it was important to establish trust and look out for students' emotional safety. Caroline reported that she was able to provide emotional support to two young students who came every week to the Study Hall session to work on their homework with her and talk with her. She speculated that they did not get a lot of attention at home and that they were open to sharing a lot of personal information and thoughts with her. She felt that it was important to be there for these students as Study Hall was not mandatory for them and yet, they always came to spend time with her.

The trust that is built in teacher-student relationships helps keep students engaged and motivated in their English studies (Henry & Thorsen, 2018). The teacher participants reported various ways in which the students exhibited trust in their teachers. For example, some students asked their teachers (Timothy and Calista) why they were teaching a certain grammar point and in what contexts they would need to use the challenging concepts the teachers taught them. These questions showed that the students not only were confident and comfortable in the classroom to ask such questions, but also that they trusted their teachers to explain how the concepts or grammar points were important. Caroline believed that students viewed teachers as more trustworthy if they too were a language student. When asked what language she spoke with students outside the classroom, Caroline responded,

> Oh always, English. If... if I'm with them, they're practicing English. Um... after... if it's during class hours especially. After class hours are over if they still want to hang out, that's fine, we can speak in Spanish, but mainly I'll choose to go back to English. It's my native language, you know, so it's more comfortable for me. But I have... I have spoken Spanish with them, so they... they know that my Spanish is... is pretty good. And they're like, "oh, okay, well I trust this person cause she's learned like I have."

Establishing trust between students and teachers is important in building relationships. While Caroline strengthened her relationships with students by talking to them after class and at times in their first language, she also recognized the importance of being a language learner. As Casanave (2012) argued, understanding the language learning process from the perspective of a student gives a teacher a lens to understand what might make the process difficult. Caroline understood that this perspective also helped her students trust her.

Students also exhibited trust in and respect for their teachers by revealing their insecurities to them. Veronica shared that some of her students proudly identified themselves as socially awkward and therefore wanted to spend more time with her during their breaks to keep speaking English rather than socialize with other students. Another student of Veronica's revealed to her that she had great anxieties. Because she had a positive relationship with Veronica, she was able to overcome some anxieties to practice English. Veronica gave her tips to quell her anxieties, and this strengthened the student's trust in Veronica. By being vulnerable with their teachers, something that Robert argued is rare and difficult, they started to pave the way for further relationship building. Knowing students' anxieties and fears can not only strengthen the relationship between the teachers and students, but can also help the teacher facilitate learning based on those emotional needs (Farrell, 2014).

This trust the students demonstrated was tied to a sense of respect for teachers in Costa Rica noted by most of the NESTs. Caroline, who taught in the U.S. prior to Costa Rica, noted a great contrast between the ways that teachers are treated in the U.S. versus in Costa Rica. She said that teachers are treated "like garbage" in the U.S.; whereas in Costa Rica, they are respected and valued. Students showed respect for their teachers by making sure they were included in out-of-class discussions. Calista, Caroline and Maryanne all noted that their students made an effort to include their teacher in conversations that are held before class and during the breaks. They translated these social conversations from Spanish to English to ensure that their teachers understood. Thus, they considered that their teacher might feel excluded from a conversation if they did not understand. The students were exhibiting community-building behaviors by including their teachers in the classroom discussions. The NESTs who took note of this were surprised and pleased by the behavior. Their awareness of students making an effort to include them taught them about the collectivist community their students experienced and shared with them. It also strengthened their relationships.

Students' Reasons and Motivations for Studying English

The students' reasons for studying English impacted how their teachers planned lessons and the way that they interacted with students. Maryanne shared that while it challenged her to work with students that did not show an interest in English, she also knew that not everyone had the same reasons and motivations for studying English. Both Maryanne and Timothy had taught business English at corporations that paid English teachers to come to the business to instruct their employees. They reported that the students in those classes were less interested and therefore less motivated to study English than their students at the language and cultural center. They both argued that that their students at the language and cultural center were more interested and motivated to study English because they chose to take English classes (rather than their

employer obligating them to take classes) and had to pay for their own classes. Maryanne's students at the language and cultural center were very preoccupied if they missed class or instructions for an assignment, and therefore, provided extra support through the class WhatsApp group to give students the information that they missed. The students in her business English classes showed less concern about attending class and studying outside of class.

While all of the teacher participants shared that their students at the language and cultural center showed interest in learning English, some teachers reported that some students were more interested in leveling up in the English classes. Robert argued that the students wanted proof that they were learning and were very worried about receiving their grades. Caroline noted that her students were concerned about getting their graduating certificate of C1- the highest level offered at the language and cultural center. Some of these preoccupations were attributed to possible work promotions or English level requirements placed by their employers. Timothy shared that as a teacher of business English at a particular corporation, the administrators had encouraged him to be dishonest about the grades students received in order to push them to a higher level to graduate from the program.

These instances illustrate a desire to level-up for business purposes at the expense of learning. While this bothered Caroline, Timothy, and Robert, they understood why their students wanted to move to the next level and get their certificates of achievement. Because of their relationships with students, these NESTs were aware of their students' reasons for studying and that not all students truly wanted to learn a new language. As Sehlaoui (2001) argued, NESTs must be aware of the social, cultural, historical and political implications that the requirements to speak English TEFL have on their students. As critical educators, they accepted the fact that some of their students were not excited to learn English, but needed to do so to provide for their

family. Maryanne felt that it was important to ask her students why they came to English classes and why they thought it was important to learn English. If they reported to her that they needed a job, she encouraged them by letting them know that the language and cultural center had many relationships with certain companies and could assist them to get a better job. She shared that this helped them see that their goals could be attained and motivated them to keep studying.

Henry and Thorsen (2018) found that motivating students is within the teacher's purview. Teachers who provide emotional as well as academic support by showing students respect and understanding motivate them to persist in their education. The NESTs at the language and cultural center showed such dedication to students by understanding their interests or needs to study English and then responding to those needs. For example, Maryanne wished to calm her students' fears about finding a job by connecting them to the companies that worked with the language and cultural center. Robert and Caroline were bothered by but understood that their students often did not want to study English, but felt obligated to do so. They exemplified critical consciousness by understanding the socioeconomic needs of their students who were busy trying to juggle work, school and family, and therefore also provided extra support and understanding to students who could not attend class.

Friendships and Familiarity with Students

The NESTs expressed ways in which they got to know their students in the TEFL classroom which sometimes led to friendships. The familiarity and trust that some teachers developed with their students led to professional and educational relationships. Some of the teachers attested that they enjoyed being friends with their students outside of the classroom, while other teachers felt that they would only be friends with their students once they left their classroom. Timothy argued that being friends with students was a positive step a NEST could take. This contrasted with what his TEFL preparation course, TEFL School 1, taught him. In the

TEFL School 1 resource book, teachers are warned not to be friends with their students. However, he shared that he disagreed with that suggestion and was good friends with some of his current and former students. When asked why he disagreed with that philosophy he shared,

> What I mean by this is that I do a lot of extracurricular things with my students and it is always a lot of fun. Going to bars, going on day trips and going to sports events. I also do intercambio sessions with my students, and from this, they have become good friends. I fully believe that my students appreciate it too. I feel like it's a big thing when it comes to student attendance because it's almost like students are coming to hang out as friends as well as learn. And it's cool! I understand it might not be seen as professional as the course might want. But this is the teaching style I have created, and I think it works really well.

Timothy emphasized here that creating positive relationships outside of class encouraged students to come to class. Timothy shared that he had positive experiences thus far from interacting with his students outside of the language and cultural center. He described how he had become close with one particular student who took him to a football game and had welcomed him into the family. Through outings such as a football game with that particular student, Timothy shared that he felt more ingrained into Costa Rica and able to feel immersed with Costa Ricans. Timothy's reflections here show that both he and the students benefited from the relationships. Veronica also shared that she had developed friendships with her students. She encouraged her class to think of one another as friends in the classroom, and they celebrated their achievements together outside of the classroom. This behavior seemed to benefit the students as they built friendships one another and became comfortable with their English teachers.

Caroline, Calista, Maryanne and Robert were more hesitant to be friends with current students. Caroline accepted a few Facebook friend requests from current students, but mostly waited until a student was considered a former student before accepting such requests. Calista also noted that she had a strict guideline to remain professional with students. However, when they would leave her class, she would be open to meeting them as friends. This practice would be supported by Snow and Campbell (2017) who attested that it can be troublesome for teachers to be friends with current students due to the power differentials between students and their teachers who assign them grades.

Snow and Campbell (2017) argued that teacher-student friendships can be both enriching and problematic. They shared that in one's home culture balancing a relationship with a student can be difficult for a teacher, so even more caution should be taken as a NEST learns about what is most culturally appropriate in a new environment. Yet, being closed off to students' interactions or gestures of kindness can be considered offensive in certain cultural contexts. In a previous study, students reported that NESTs who did not understand the local culture can come off as cold and that their interactions with students are simply mechanical (Han, 2005). Thus, it can be hard for a NEST to know how to manage such relationships, which is why they benefit from learning more about their host community through other local informants and friends.

Becoming close friends with a particular student can lead to perceptions of favoritism by other students (Snow & Campbell, 2017), as Robert noted. In addition, the danger of getting involved in a romantic relationship with a student can result in an unpleasant fallout. Robert divulged that he had developed an intimate relationship with a student that did not go well. He noted some of the ways that the relationship impacted him in the classroom. The student started to call him by his name in class rather than refer to him as "Teacher," as most students did, and

she brought him food to class. These intimate gestures made him uncomfortable as other students noted the difference in behavior as well. When the relationship ended, the student switched to another class but continued to run into Robert at the language and cultural center. Those interactions remained cordial but distant. After this experience, Robert realized how a romantic relationship could impact his teaching, his students and his role at the language and cultural center.

Snow and Campbell (2017) warned against romantic relationships with students in general, and advised that in most cultures, the teacher-student romantic relationship is frowned upon and considered taboo. They argued that a teacher risks losing respect from their colleagues and administrators and may even lose their job. Because male-female relationships are not common in many cultures, some friendly gestures made between teachers and students can be misinterpreted (Snow & Campbell, 2017). Ultimately, Robert agreed with these guidelines and said that he had learned from that experience. It taught him to be more cautious with his female students and to avoid becoming too intimate with any student.

Conflict and Confrontation in Teacher-Student Relationships

Lantolf and Pavlenko (2000) argued that people make meaning of the world around them using tools various tools such as language. As people cross national and cultural borders, they may face conflicts that require new and different tools than they were once accustomed to using (Ryan & Viete, 2009). Addressing conflict and being confrontational both in and outside the classroom were challenges reported by five of the six teachers. As intercultural educators, they needed to find new tools to address the conflict. Robert shared an experience where he asked a student in front of her classmates why she was in a bad mood and joked that it was due to a break-up. She quickly became more upset, packed up her things and left the classroom. He followed her out and apologized and wanted to make the situation better. The student seemingly

brushed off the incident and told the teacher not to worry, but still left the classroom for the day. Avoiding confrontation, neither the teacher nor the student brought up the situation again, but the student did return to class the following class period. Robert reported that he learned from this situation that caring for students' emotional safety was very important. He was more careful after that to be considerate of his students' emotional well-being and not to offend them. Robert learned from this instance to protect students' from feeling embarrassment and shame.

One way to ease communications with students who are struggling to keep up with pace of lessons was to bring the students to the receptionists or to the administrative coordinator for assistance. Timothy, Caroline, Calista and Veronica noted that they utilized the expertise of the caring, Spanish-speaking support staff to communicate difficult topics with students. When students are referred to the STAR program for extra English practice, the teachers brought their students to the receptionists who explained the program in Spanish and helped students sign up for the extra opportunities to practice English at the language and cultural center. Marlena, the administrative coordinator for the foreign languages department was known to assist with conflicts between teachers and students. Students trusted Marlena to assist when they did not want to confront their teachers directly about an issue regarding them. All teachers felt that shame and embarrassment were examples of deeply shared cultural feelings in Costa Ricans. These accounts were some of the instances that brought these feelings to light, and the teachers reflected on their behavior to avoid shaming and embarrassing their students.

Both Calista and Caroline noted that some of their students stopped coming to their class after conflictual situations or after they had to tell the student that they were falling behind. For Calista, some students complained that they did not like their teacher, and therefore wanted the language and cultural center to replace the teacher with another. Those students did not speak to

Calista about their concerns but instead asked Marlena to change their teacher. Marlena spoke with Calista who did not want to argue with her students over their displeasure with her teaching, so she switched classes and no longer taught those students. She avoided any conflictual conversations, but never fully understood what the problem was between herself and her students.

In Caroline's classroom, a misunderstanding arose between her and a student that kept coming late to class. On the day of class presentations, the student had been instructed to wait outside the classroom on the bench if she arrived late. Caroline waited and looked multiple times outside the room for the student, but she did not show. After further waiting, Caroline reported that Marlena came to the classroom to let Caroline know that the student was crying in her office because she was not allowed inside the class. Caroline stated that the student had lied about this situation. Her description of the situation revealed that it was hard for her as a teacher to know how to communicate with that particular student. Prior to the oral presentation day conflict, Caroline had not gotten to the root of the students' inability to arrive to class on time. Therefore, a lack of communication was already brewing. While she did not come to a positive resolution in that particular situation, Caroline raised an important issue to the need for intercultural competence skills to address this situation. If Caroline had used her Spanish speaking skills to speak with the student earlier in the course, the student could have explained herself in her native language, and they might have been able to reach a better understanding about the student's tardiness. Instead, there was tension between the teacher and the student that went unaddressed and the student eventually stopped coming to English classes altogether.

These stories demonstrated that the teachers reflected on their interactions with their students and were trying to improve their behavior in an intercultural setting. However, when

they were unable to speak with their students, they missed an opportunity for growth in intercultural competence and for a deepening trust in their teacher-student relationships. Some aspects of the aforementioned conflicts can be attributed to cultural differences or misunderstandings. As they reflected on these situations, the teachers developed their savoir faire by seeking to understand the layers of cultural differences between themselves and their students to find a resolution. They had an opportunity to ease tensions and find a third space, which is an intercultural space where aspects of both the target culture and host cultural are negotiated (Kramsch, 1993). One way to enter into the third space is for the NESTs to recognize that their identity as a NEST in the TEFL classroom gives them power and privilege. Third space pedagogy invites teachers to address the conflict under the context of their host community (Ryan & Viete, 2009), rather than the anglocentric perspectives of their home communities. In a similar vein, Robert mentioned that NESTs should not be entitled, and these teachers demonstrated that they heeded such advice by apologizing for their mistakes. However, in the space of negotiation, teachers and students can learn from each other by moving through their "collision, discussion and reflection" (Ryan & Viete, 2009, p. 3). They can come to a greater understanding of their students and strengthen relationships with them.

In the stories shared by Calista and Caroline, they were unable to resolve the conflicts with their students. By bringing their students to Marlena, they found a helpful intermediary who spoke the students' native language. However, the NESTs themselves did not get to learn what the real issue was underlying the conflict, and therefore the resolution resulted in separation of the teacher and students. They did not get to enter into the third space in those moments. Robert attempted to mend the relationship with the student he offended, but she was not willing to discuss the situation. He made the first step of entering into a third space by recognizing his

privilege as the teacher in that situation, but ultimately the student decided to avoid further conflict and that was the end of the discussion. Being able to enter into a dialogue with another person is essential for intercultural competence development (Ryan & Viete, 2009). Therefore, when neither the teacher nor the students address a conflict, the opportunity for learning and growth is stifled. One new tool that the teachers could utilize in these situations is Spanish. If they were able to speak to students in their language, the students could have been able to explain themselves in the language most comfortable to them. Unfortunately, some of the teachers did not speak Spanish well enough yet, and others did not use it in those conflicts.

Discussion

This second theme regarding the interactions and relationships between students and teachers sheds light on the first research question that inquired, "How do NESTs' understanding of their students' culture shape their teaching practice, and based on this understanding, how do teachers adapt to students' needs and behavior?" As Farrell (2014) noted, education is an opportunity for relationships to grow between teachers and students. Ikeda (2010) argued, it is the teachers that more directly impact their students than their lesson plans or the materials they use. The students who came to class ahead of time, stayed after or sought out extra opportunities to spend time with their teachers, showed a desire to form a relationship with their teacher. Four of the six teachers also exemplified the desire to get to know their students outside of the classroom, and all of them expressed a personal understanding of many of their students. The NESTs spent time getting to know most of their students in class periods and establishing positive relationships. In doing so, they exemplified Kerdchoochuen's (2011) concept of openness, where teachers and students share parts of their personal lives with one other. Having an open teacher is a desired characteristic by some ELLs who look to make personal connections with their teacher. Many ELLs at language and cultural centers looked for that in their teachers.

Therefore, the NESTs who were open to conversing with students outside of the classroom and learning more about their personal lives cultivated good relationships with their students.

ELLs look for ways in which they can trust their English foreign language teachers (Han, 2005). Knowing their students' needs, goals and desires as well as developing trust, respect and camaraderie proved to be essential steps for positive teacher-student relationships in the Costa Rican TEFL classroom. The NESTs appeared to have gained that trust from many students in the ways that they knew personal and professional details about the students they saw frequently, and were able to build positive interactions with those students because of that knowledge. Knowing their students allowed teachers to create better lessons which supported students' learning (Odhuu, 2014) and taught teachers to let go of previously held stereotypes (Hynds, 2012). Because the concepts of family and community are central to Costa Rican culture, supporting a familial and communal atmosphere in the classroom benefited NESTs and their ELLs alike. The more that the NESTs were familiar with Costa Rican values and cultural norms such as these, the better they were able to connect with their students.

This theme must also be analyzed from a sociocultural theoretical lens considering that the language learning process in these classrooms is social. As Lantolf and Thorne (2007) described, the process of internalizing what one knows results from a cognitive connection to the social environment in which one learns. The students are socialized to the variety of English that the teacher uses, whether it is from rural U.S., British Columbia, Canada or eastern England. The NESTs shared their specific language with them and the cultural backgrounds they embodied. The students were thus socialized differently in the English language community depending upon their specific teacher, and this gave them varying new tools and ways of using the language. Students are taught social languages so they know how to adapt their speech in

different settings to be appropriately understood (Gee, 2006). In the TEFL classroom, these NESTs in Costa Rica taught students how they would adapt their speech in the workplace versus a casual, social setting. This also depended on the background of each NEST, who learned to navigate professional and social settings differently.

Teachers must structure learning for their students to help them learn new material without the anxieties and frustrations that can prevent internalization (Krashen, 1981). As the NESTs learned more about their students, they were better able to scaffold to their needs, working within their ZPD to make the language approachable to them. When teachers like Calista assessed her student's writing and knew how to assist the student within her ZPD, she worked with her to rewrite the paper, using the vocabulary, syntax and semantics the student already had to write a better paper. They were also able to understand their reasons for studying English and thus provided the students with the vocabulary, assignments or activities most relevant to their needs and interests. These efforts reduce the affective filter that can prevent learning.

While they focused on developing positive interactions with their students, it was apparent that this was at times difficult. Four of the teachers shared stories of instances where they had a memorably difficult or negative experience with a student. Some of the reasons behind this disconnect can be attributed to cultural differences and misunderstandings (Ryan & Viete, 2009; Kerdchoochuen, 2011), and other reasons were due simply to natural misunderstandings between humans. As teachers further develop their intercultural competence, they may become better at addressing those conflicts. Understanding Costa Rican culture and concepts such as confrontation, shame and communication assisted the teachers in addressing tension, yet there was still room for growth in that area. Learning the native language of the

students helps NESTs learn more about their host community, (Chun, 2016; Han, 2005; Rao, 2010) which is why speaking Spanish proficiently helped the NESTs like Robert, Caroline and Timothy learn more about Costa Rican culture and connect it to the TEFL classroom. In moments where conflicts arise between students in the classroom or between teachers and students, using Spanish would help the NESTs understand their students, their concerns or anxieties and would likely assist in finding a resolution between them.

As they developed savoir s'engager, NESTs are called to critically reflect on their sociocultural identities and those of their students (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Solano Campus, 2012). There are always unequal power relations between teachers and students, as the teachers hold the power of assigning grades, giving certificates or providing learning opportunities (Ryan & Viete, 2009; Snow & Campbell, 2017). Getting to know their students on a personal level allowed the teachers to learn more about their identities, the rhythm of their lives and their worldviews. This helped teachers learn to behave more appropriately in Costa Rica and how to be better NESTs. As Robert mentioned that NESTs need not be entitled, the NESTs noted ways in which the teacher-student relationships and interactions taught them to be adaptable to their host community, rather than expect the students to adapt to their ways of thinking and doing. Entering into personal or professional relationships with students taught the teachers to address the dynamics that arise between themselves and their students. It appears that some of the teachers were still navigating these relationships and power differentials. With time and continued critical reflections, they may further develop their savoir s'engager and find a balance in their teacher-student relationships.

Chapter 6
Findings and Discussion:
Teachers' attitudes towards TEFL and responses to students' needs in the TEFL classroom

From their relationships and interactions with students, all the NESTs reported that they learned about and responded to students' cultural, personal and educational needs as students. Some of the adaptations were made by the NESTs due to their sense of what were collective Costa Rican cultural norms, and other adaptations were made simply due to the personal needs of individual students. In chapter four, some of the behaviors, beliefs and attitudes that the NESTs perceived of Costa Ricans were discussed, and some of these perceptions were derived from interactions with their Costa Rican and other Latin American students. The manners in which they perceived certain behaviors, beliefs and attitudes came from a combination of their experiences in and outside the classroom. When they learned and were challenged by certain behaviors, beliefs and attitudes, they either ignored the challenge, fought it or adapted. It is problematic to address all students from a given cultural background as having the same characteristics or needs, (Ryan & Viete, 2009) and their students came from many different sociocultural backgrounds, which is why the NESTs made adaptations due to specific needs they learned from their individual students. Additionally, as new practitioners in the field of TEFL, their perceptions of the profession influenced their responses to students' needs as ELLs. In this chapter, I review the third and final theme that emerged from the data. What I analyze here are the modifications and adjustments that the teachers made due to their perception of their role in the TEFL field and towards students' cultural, personal and educational needs in the TEFL classroom.

Perceptions of TEFL as a Career

Most of the teachers shared that their experience of teaching English was a career path, not just a job. Five of the six NESTs shared that they were committed to teaching again after

their current position. Veronica shared that she might not continue to teach in the future and considered the TEFL job as "practice." She noted that a major aspect of her desire to teach English in Costa Rica was so that she could travel, and this idea is reflected thoroughly in TEFL certification promotional materials. Many advertisements for TEFL certification programs publicize their programs as a way simply to travel the world, see exotic lands, or even get over an ex-partner. TEFL School 1 posted a meme on Facebook that said, "When moving abroad to teach English is the best answer to your recent break-up." During a promotional webinar for TEFL School 1, they shared six reasons to teach abroad.

Figure 3: TEFL School 1 Reasons to Teach Abroad

Reasons to Teach Abroad:

1. Realistic and affordable way to travel the world.
2. Live life as a local, not a rushed vacationer. Teaching abroad is much cheaper than a 2-week backpacking trip to Europe.
3. Learn a new language.
4. New Friends. You'll always have a couch to crash on all over the world.
5. Boost your resume with professional international work experience.
6. Great financial benefits in some countries.

Source: Anonymous 1 (2016). TEFL School 1

All of these points seek to glamorize TEFL and sell the position with attractive benefits to the teacher. The first two points exemplify that TEFL is promoted as a way to travel. Additionally, the fourth point that indicates one can make friends in order to stay at their homes in the future shows a less critical understanding of the profession and exemplifies a way that

NESTs may build relationships simply to benefit themselves. Earning money and building professional experiences are necessary for survival, but do not highlight the opportunities for intercultural exchanges, nor address teaching as a profession. The aforementioned post and this list do not honor the critical pedagogical practice of teaching English.

The ideas promoted from TEFL School 1 diminish the significance of a career in TEFL. Some of the points listed above do not honor the job of teaching as a career that affects students who may need to learn English to support their family. Ruecker and Ives (2014) argued that many TEFL recruitment advertisements focus on the ways that teaching English abroad benefits NESTs rather than show the requirements or relative experience needed for the position. In their study, Ruecker and Ives found that many TEFL recruiters call for teachers by advertising free airfare, free accommodations and exoticise the lands in which the teachers may work. The advertisements show images of teachers as generally young, white and often explicitly call for native English speakers (Ruecker & Ives, 2014). Some institutions across the world advertise minimal requirements for English foreign language teachers beyond being a NEST.

While the language and cultural center hired teachers with at least a bachelor's degree, Robert felt that teachers should be able to teach even if they did not have their bachelor’s degree. He felt that the language and cultural center should be more open-minded about hiring someone who did not have a bachelor’s degree if they were still a good person. While teachers should be hired for their positive characteristics, establishing educational requirements for a teaching position heightens the level of recognition for the role and the level of teachers’ expectations of their duties and responsibilities. As Han (2005) argued, NESTs often rely simply on their status as a native speaker to get a position, and in some areas of the world they are able to get a TEFL job without a background in education. However, proper qualifications are necessary for

teaching, especially in an intercultural context. Additionally, when NESTs without qualifications are hired over NNESTs who are certified to teach, linguistic discrimination prevails. This is discussed further below.

The NESTs interviewed in this study valued their role as teachers. Robert, Caroline and Maryanne all described their participation in TEFL as a vocation or calling. They each noted that they felt positively shaped by the TEFL field. Caroline argued that she learned a lot from the TEFL certificate program because she was truly a teacher at heart. She argued that those who put in the effort and who really care to teach will be strong TEFL teachers. Maryanne stated that she was shaped by TEFL because it brought her to parts of Costa Rica she had never seen before, introduced her to people all over the country and made her feel appreciated in her role as a teacher. She planned to teach English as a foreign language for a long while. Even though Robert argued that he saw himself as a teacher for his career, he shared some aspects of his teaching practice that appeared to mirror the teacher who views TEFL as merely a job. He stated that he only gets paid for the hours that he is working in the language and cultural center, which is why he would take his time to return graded papers back to students. He also admitted that he sometimes arrived to class without a lesson prepared, and therefore was scrambling in the last minutes before class started. While he shared that he viewed teaching as a calling, these two examples of his teaching practice showed that he did not always place his role of a teacher as a priority.

Some of the teachers shared that while they were invested in teaching as a profession, some other NESTs that they had met view their teaching position as a way to make money while vacationing. When Maryanne described her experience teaching English at a camp on the Western coast of Costa Rica, she noted that her two co-teachers worked as if they were on

vacation, and therefore were not prepared to teach English, nor showed commitment to being English teachers. They had very little teacher training and looked out for themselves before their students and fellow teacher. Fortunately, most of the NESTs interviewed in this study spoke about their teaching profession with commitment.

Of all the teacher participants, Caroline had the longest background in teaching and experience in Costa Rica. She received her teaching licensure from the state of Utah and had taught drama, music and English for eight years prior to moving to Costa Rica. Her extensive teaching experience gave her a critical perspective of teaching and living in Costa Rica. Caroline believed that language education was more than just a means to get a better job. She felt that language can connect people all over the world and that people should be able to communicate with others in more than one language. She argued that culture and language shape the way you perceive the world and felt that it was important to experience cultures other than one's own. She found that TEFL gave her a new lens to view the world. She loved language education because it is a sharing of cultures, not just of holidays, but of what people value and the way they view the world. This perspective honored the sociocultural theoretical perspective of language education and emphasized the possibility of growth. The NESTs like her who took their job seriously learned from TEFL to be adaptable and to be considerate of their students' cultural, personal and educational needs in the classroom.

Teacher identity and teaching philosophy in TEFL.

All of the teacher participants proudly owned the identity of "teacher," and five of them indicated that they considered teaching as a long term career. Four of the six participants shared that they wanted to continue teaching TEFL abroad or TESL in their home country for the foreseeable future. The resource book at TEFL School 1 argued that teachers maintain their

identity as a "teacher" even after the class is over because students recognize them as their teacher as they move throughout their city and surrounding area. TEFL School 1 claimed that they must always garner the respect and trust of their students even if they see them outside of the classroom. The teachers are part of the host community, and therefore they must be aware of their participation in the community (Anonymous 1, 2016). The NESTs corroborated that claim, as they argued they ran into their students on the street and in stores and were always aware of their identity as a teacher.

TEFL School 2 also focused on the need for TEFL teachers to take their role seriously. In an excerpt from their mission statement they stated,

> ... the majority of us need to acquire the skills to be good and hopefully great teachers by learning a variety of teaching styles to accommodate a variety of learning styles and student groups. There are certain traits that help people to be good teachers such as patience, willingness to help others, people skills and the ability to communicate effectively and in a variety of ways. It is also important that teachers continue to learn and take an active position in research and investigation in the art of pedagogy. The best teachers are the ones who demonstrate a true passion for what they teach, and a genuine interest in their students. They are the ones that get excited about the material, look the students in the eyes and are truly concerned whether the students understand what they are saying or not. They are the ones that challenge students to think for themselves, and to become educated in a variety of ways: by asking questions, researching and playing an active role in their education (Anonymous 2, 2018).

This excerpt illustrated the philosophy held by TEFL School 2 to prepare teachers to be active researchers in developing their teaching skills. Although it does not state explicitly that

being an effective teacher required more than just being a native English speaker, it emphasized that most people need to acquire additional skills to be a good teacher. One cannot rely on their personality alone, but must learn how to teach. Additionally, their philosophy to encourage students to think for themselves is indicative of the critical pedagogy introduced by Freire (1999, 2005). As the organization advocated that students ask questions and be active in their education, it must prepare teachers to work through the answers with their students. Yet, the mission statement does not state that teachers should be critically aware of the sociocultural identities of their students or reflective of their own.

A dedication to teaching in general, and for some teacher participants a dedication to TEFL in particular, shows a commitment to the profession that is not pervasive in the TEFL field. As Ruecker and Ives (2014) discovered, many TEFL recruitment sites do not require previous teaching experience. Therefore, teachers like Caroline who had spent three years teaching in Costa Rica and eight years teaching in the U.S. were rare. Her commitment to education was shown by 11 years of teaching in various classrooms. It was not surprising then that Caroline's comments often showed her critical consciousness towards teaching and her growing intercultural competence in TEFL in Costa Rica. Her reflections towards her students' cultural practices, their individual beliefs and behaviors showed that she has spent time developing savoirs, savoir comprendre, savoir faire, savoir être and savoir s'engager.

Caroline's philosophy for teaching was to be the best teacher she could be by teaching the whole person and not just viewing them as a language learner. She stated that she hoped her students would want to be better people and be world changers. In order to bring this philosophy to life, she was mindful of the fact that culture shapes the expectations she and students had of their language learning process. Culture also challenges both the teacher's and students'

perspectives of the world. Caroline stated, “You have to respect people's opinions, because their opinions are shaped by the culture they grew up in.” This critical perspective of her students’ cultural background allowed her to continue teaching them without trying to force them to believe what she believed. At the same time, she argued that she wanted to “make them better people” and noted, “I guess it's prideful to say that I feel like I want to make close minded individuals into better people. Maybe... maybe they really are really good people.” It was something she admittedly struggled with in her role as a teacher, as she added, “My actual goal is to teach them a language.” However, she did want her students leaving her classroom wanting to be better people.

Further critical reflection on this statement raises the question, “What does it mean to be a better person?” and “Who decides what makes one a better person?” Dedication to teaching the “whole person” rather than thinking of students as just ELLs, is an important part of language education (Schwarzer, 2009), and Caroline indicated that was her intention. However, as she wondered, “maybe they really are really good people,” she indicated that she was not going to assume that she knew what would make her students better people. It appears that a critical pedagogical approach to this desire would invite her to reflect more on what makes someone a “good person” and how she saw her role in that development considering her identity markers and those of her students.

The NESTs shared that their skills as teachers were not shaped solely from their TEFL certificate programs. In addition to Caroline’s strongly established identity as a teacher, four of the other teacher participants talked about how their previous work experiences shaped their decision to teach English as a foreign language and their ability to effectively teach. Their identities had shifted from restaurant server/bartender, retail manager, clinician at a residential

facility, trainer and manager at major financial institutions, and a designer in computer aided design (CAD) to TEFL teachers. Aspects of their previous occupational identities seeped into their work in TEFL. Caroline discussed how her background in the performance arts helped her creatively design classes for the children's program and to assist other teachers with lesson plans for children and adults. Calista's work in a residential treatment facility impacted her ability to handle conflict in the classroom and to find ways to connect with students who misbehaved. She understood that acting out in class was not necessarily a sign of resistance to the teacher. Calista said, "It's like, behavior problems aren't necessarily behavior problems. They're misunderstanding problems and boredom problems. And so... those are usually your struggling students." Maryanne's experience as a risk manager and trainer taught her how to be flexible and lead others. She had to be in a new city every three days and train employees how to reduce risks and address issues at their financial centers. Those job requirements taught her how to be adaptable to change and to gently guide individuals who might be making a mistake. Such skills are transferable to the TEFL classroom. Their previous work experiences along with the lessons that they learned from the TEFL certificate programs taught them that to be a strong teacher required making adaptations to students' cultural, personal and educational needs.

The practice of TEFL shaped some of the teachers to become more open-minded. Timothy shared that being a TEFL teacher led him to interact with people he might have otherwise avoided. He stated that one of his students had an appearance that intimidated him at first. This student had many tattoos and appeared "dodgy," as Timothy described him. As Timothy got to know him, he realized the student had a personal history and was very nice. This experience taught him to judge less and to get to know people before assuming the worst about them. Learning more about this student led Timothy to address his stereotypes about people with

tattoos, and his savoir être became more open to those whose styles were different from his. As Hynds (2012) attested, getting to know students on a personal level helps teachers unlearn some of the negative stereotypes they had previously held. The development of Timothy's intercultural competence because of his experience in the TEFL field led him to learn more about his students and let go of negative assumptions. The ways in which he and the other NESTs valued their identity as a teacher and appreciated the field of TEFL built intercultural competence to learn about their students' needs and make accommodations for them.

Perceptions of English in Costa Rica

As Solano Campos (2012) noted, critical educators understand that people's identities shape how they view the world. Moreover, critical language educators in Costa Rica must be conscious of the way that English impacts the sociocultural identities of their students. Many of the students at the language and cultural center reported to their teachers that they studied English to advance their careers. However, the teacher participants did not often discuss the disadvantages of this pressure on their students to study English, or the rate at which English is spreading across the world. As Sehlaoui (2001) argued, NESTs have a responsibility to be conscious of the social, cultural, historical and political implications of TEFL in their host country and on their students.

Kramsch (2004) argued that an example of intercultural competence is teaching what "must be taught but cannot be tested" (p. 47). That which must be taught involves teaching students to question what they are learning and making it applicable to their lives. Many teachers shared that some of their students felt obligated to learn English due to English requirements at their jobs or their parents forcing them to study it. According to the TEFL School 1 resource book, English is regarded as a global language that is the third most spoken language in the world by native speakers, and that the number of second language English speakers makes it the

most spoken language in the world. They claim it is the lingua franca that is the official language of 67 countries and in many global organizations such as NATO, United Nations, OPEC and others (Anonymous 1, 2016). In this excerpt, the book does not discuss the impact of this growth on students or the economic distress it may cause for them to achieve high levels of English proficiency. Robert also argued that English is a lingua franca and that it has absorbed many other cultures. Even though he argued that learning English is necessary for students to earn more money, he shared that students still like studying it and not all do so for employment. Moreover, while he noted that they are paying money to be in class, he did not express concern over the financial burden it may be for students.

Only one teacher reported that one of her students shared his frustration with the need to learn English. He stated that in a few years German and Mandarin will surpass English in global "importance." This student challenged the national push for English proficiency by arguing that German and Mandarin would soon become more of an economic necessity over English which was an example of a student demonstrating critical consciousness of TEFL. This comment was raised by Veronica's student, and she told him that he was probably right. However, the student felt that learning English was necessary for him to earn more money in the present, which was why he continued to do so. This was a common perspective of students, given that many jobs in Costa Rica require English, especially the large, international corporations located in the tax free zones. This student raised an important question about the current power and prestige attributed to English across the globe. Lems, Miller, and Soro (2017) argued that such questions are founded in sociocultural theories of language education. The social, cultural and economic capital attributed to speakers of English disadvantages those who do not have access to it

(Córdoba González, 2011). Such questions must be asked by teachers and students, as well as other stakeholders in the TEFL field.

Maryanne viewed her work as a TEFL teacher as "giving back" and believed that teaching English helped her students better their lives. Her perspectives on English illustrated the power she attributed to English and being a native English speaker. She shared that her students viewed English as very important to their ability to get better jobs and have a better life. Solano Campos (2012) argued that being proficient in English in Costa Rica positively impacts one's salary. Speaking with great English proficiency can help a student get a job at a call center for a U.S. American company, and this was perceived as one of the better paid jobs in Costa Rica. She noted that being a U.S. American and native English speaker was not something she had previously considered to be so valuable until she started teaching there. She said that speaking English was a "life-changer" for her students. Unfortunately, the call centers contributed to the large U.S. American influence in Costa Rica as they were located in the tax free zones. Therefore, U.S. American companies and other foreign companies are taking advantage of a cheaper labor force and positioning their companies in places that require them to pay little to no taxes. Maryanne and the other NESTs did not raise this point when they discussed that their students were focused on learning English to get better jobs. However, they argued that the students valued their English education because they paid a lot of money for it. Therefore, some students paid a lot of money to gain English skills to ultimately help U.S. American companies save money.

While the NESTs did not address this in our conversations, they did all take into account that their students spent a lot of time and money on their English classes. Overall, the teachers shared that their students expressed interest in learning English for a variety of reasons, with

varying levels of resources to do so. The language and cultural center is a private institution where classes cost between 2,416-2,250 Costa Rican colones/US $3.89 -$3.60 per hour. For the economic classes, the cost ranges between $43 and $48 per month. The intensive classes cost between $151 to $159 per month. This is quite expensive when the average income per capita is $618 per month (INEC, 2018). Taking a critical approach to language education in Costa Rica means making the weekly lessons relevant to the daily lives of students. Many of the NESTs recognized that and responded by working hard to please their students and accommodate their needs and interests.

All of the teachers shared that most of their students were hardworking and invested in learning English for their future. Caroline stated that she pushed her students to work hard and to get the most out of their classes because she cared about the money they spent on classes. She was a self-proclaimed strict teacher, because she wanted her students to succeed in order to provide for their families. The NESTs recognized that Costa Ricans see English as an investment in their future and the well-being of their family, as Córdoba González (2011) and Solano Campos (2014) attested. The NESTs who took their job seriously and worked hard for their students (as they most often did) showed the critical consciousness needed in English foreign language education. While some teachers in the field of English foreign language education see their role as a way to make money while traveling (Ruecker & Ives, 2014), critically conscious teachers place value in their position and their students' needs. Most of the NESTs expressed a commitment to their role as teachers and to their students, but none of them called critical attention to the students' reliance on English for career advancement.

Continued Promotion of the "Native Speaker Fallacy"

The language and cultural center in which this study was conducted only hired NESTs and publicized to their students that all teachers are native speakers, thus promoting the fallacy

that a NEST is best. The notion that a native speaker is better simply because of their native speaker status has long been dispelled (Phillipson, 1992), yet many administrators and students still buy into it. Only one teacher, Caroline, noted explicitly that being a native speaker may not always benefit a teacher in their instruction. She stated that as a native speaker she did not realize how to teach a grammar point from the perspective of an ELL. While Calista noted that she learned English differently from her ELLs, she did not speak to the point that being a NEST may be a disadvantage when it comes to grammar explanations. Learning English as a foreign language is a unique experience that a NEST lacks. NNESTs may be more likely to be empathetic to ELLs' needs since they also have had the experience of learning English as a foreign language (Ma, 2012). Thus, NESTs may have some weaknesses in terms of grammar explanations. As was quoted by an ELL in a study by Rao (2010),

> As NES teachers have not gone through the complex process of learning the English language as a foreign language, they are lack of insight into typical problems of Chinese students and are unable to anticipate the language difficulties for us (p. 63).

NESTs who do not know Spanish may not foresee the areas of difficulty for their Spanish-speaking students nor understand the experience of learning English as a foreign language. However, NESTs are often considered for promotions or leadership positions. Caroline criticized her previous place of employment stating that the only reason she was made the director of the English department was due to her role as a native speaker. She was also careful about the image she presented of a native English speaker to her students. When she talked about U.S. or native English speakers, she would not generalize or assume to know how all native speakers would say a particular word or phrase. When teaching students about certain practices or ways of speaking in English, she shared that she had previously told students, "Well this is

how many people umm... in the U.S. do it," or "Well this is how a native speaker would say it," but after thinking that comment might be problematic and untrue, she changed her statement to, "Well, I guess it depends on where you're from, but you know, in general, this is how I think a native speaker would say it." Her ability to reflect on the fact that people's positionality or regional location might affect the way they speak prevents students from generalizing all U.S. Americans or all native English speakers. However, to once again challenge the native speaker fallacy, it would also have been advantageous for her to say, "This is how an English speaker would say it," rather than emphasize a "native" English speaker. To frequently reference the native speaker as the voice of authority in teaching English, neglects to teach with a critical lens. It gives undue authority to the native speaker when non-native speakers have also learned how to use the language.

Robert reflected on a time in class when one of his students challenged his teaching of a certain grammar point in English. Robert believed that the student was wrong and his response was, "You don't want to say like, 'Oh how long have you been a native speaker?' Or you know, you don't want to bring that up." This response exemplified a sense of native speaker authority from Robert that implied he knew the language better simply because he was a native speaker. It negates the fact that a non-native speaker learns English with different explanations for grammar than a native speaker does. A speaker who has learned English as a foreign language can often explain the grammar from the perspective of an ELL in a way that the native English speaker does not see (Macaro & Lee; 2013; Rao, 2010). This comment exemplified a gap in critical consciousness in this teacher, because he relied on his identity as a native English speaker rather than a trained teacher to explain a grammar point. Additionally, it could have been a learning opportunity for the teacher and the students to learn how the student viewed the grammar point.

There are opportunities such as this for the students to teach their NESTs how they view and understand English if they do not understand or disagree with the teacher's presentation. If teachers utilize their savoir comprendre, they can compare the two languages and find why there might be confusion and how to avoid misunderstandings. However, relying on an explanation because the teacher is a native speaker is not sufficient.

Accents and pronunciation.

Kostogriz and Doecke (2007) argued that the global spread of English has promoted an unfair standard of acceptable pronunciation and native-like fluency. Veronica stated that one of her students very much wanted her to strictly correct her student's pronunciation because the student wanted to sound "natural." When asked what she meant by "natural," Veronica clarified that she meant, "like a native speaker." This shows that there is a strong preference for ELLs to sound like a native speaker, which does not represent a critical approach to language education and can lead to accent discrimination (Solano Campos, 2012). When a student asked Veronica to help her sound like Kim Kardashian, Veronica told the student that should not be one of her goals, but Veronica did not challenge her students who asked her to help them sound like a native speaker. A critical approach to accents would encourage students to be proud of the way that they speak and not glorify any particular accent. Caroline reminded students not to be afraid of making mistakes in pronunciation. She reported that she did not have perfect pronunciation in Spanish either and thus, they should not be scared to make mistakes in English.

Accent discrimination is sometimes clouded by a focus on improving pronunciation. Timothy shared that the more he taught English as a foreign language, the more that he valued pronunciation practice. He argued that while he liked accents, he found that improving pronunciation was important in the professional world. Timothy stated that some students

preferred his English accent. He shared that he was proud that his students pronounced certain words with an English accent rather than a U.S. American accent because he was the only English teacher at the language and cultural center. Thus, he benefited from the praise of his English accent and also felt that it was professional for students to work on pronunciation. It seems that the push for pronunciation improvement is connected to the native speaker fallacy and the discrimination against non-native speakers. The desire to sound like a native speaker and the growing importance placed on pronunciation highlights the marginalization and discrimination of those who speak with non-standard English accents (Aslan & Thompson, 2017; Solano Campos, 2014). To take a critical pedagogical stance towards accent and pronunciation, it would behoove the teachers to encourage pronunciation for understanding with the reminder to value all accents. NESTs could thus help their students improve their English speaking skills while building their confidence. While the NESTs made concerted efforts to engage students and adapt to their varying needs, learning more about non-standard varieties of English, accent discrimination and non-native speaker discrimination are additional ways that NESTs can learn to raise critical consciousness in the field of TEFL.

Addressing Student Shame, Embarrassment and Disengagement

Students' emotions and attitudes affect their language learning. Affective variables such as motivation, self-confidence and anxieties impact the student's success with language acquisition. When students experience negative feelings, their affective filter is raised and blocks information from being received. In order for students to learn, they must be open to the information. However, certain activities can cause anxieties and embarrassment, which closes students off from learning (Krashen, 1982). Some of the teachers shared their understanding of students' experiences of shame and embarrassment, and their adaptation to those feelings. Caroline argued that shame and embarrassment were very much a part of Costa Rican culture

and that this was made manifest by students' fears of making a mistake. Because of this fear, Caroline attested that she was a flexible grader who accommodated for students' anxieties towards oral exams and presentations. Many students feared making a mistake when they were speaking in English, so she allowed them to give their oral presentations with low lighting to ease their anxieties. She also encouraged the whole class to support one another and be positive when students were speaking. Veronica also learned to adapt her class periods when students had to give oral presentation. She attempted to calm their fears by reminding them that they were all friends and encouraged the students to cheer each other on and not tease one another. She also learned a strategy that encouraged students to talk with each other. During class, she sometimes played music softly so that their conversations were muffled. This allowed them to have conversations in English with the person sitting next to them without their other classmates overhearing their mistakes.

Calista and Maryanne shared that they too were conscious of students who expressed shame and embarrassment. Calista learned to adjust her approach to speaking with a student who could not keep up in class. When she met with a particular student to encourage him to enroll in the STAR program, she noted that tears came to his eyes as he told her that he did not understand what she was saying. She claimed that he was ashamed that he was falling behind in class. She approached the situation with gentleness and empathy. She had known that the conversation would be difficult and took time to be with the student before telling him to sign up for the STAR program. She relied on her Spanish-speaking colleagues who worked in the reception department of the center to explain to the student in his first language what the program entailed, while trying to ease his concerns. Often issues of shame and embarrassment arose during the activities constructed for class. When the subject of family came up in class, Maryanne

discovered that students who were in their 40s appeared embarrassed if they did not have a spouse. Additionally, she said that because she found infidelity to be a big problem in marriages, she avoided topics of discussion like marriage and relationships in the classroom and in assignments.

Maryanne also confirmed that when students got embarrassed, they disengaged. She stated, “if they're embarrassed, it's over, they're shutting down... You're not getting anything... you're not getting anything out of them once they get embarrassed. So it's like... ‘Yep, I'm good. Let someone else answer.’” To adapt to this issue, Maryanne said that she tried to create a comfortable environment and invited humor in the class so that students could laugh at themselves. She sometimes spoke to them with the little Spanish she knew to show them that they were not alone in the struggle of learning a new language. She demonstrated that she could make mistakes and laugh at herself to encourage them to do the same. She showed them that they were all learning together.

Some teachers knew that confronting a problematic issue in class could result in upsetting or embarrassing the student. Calista shared a memory of an instance which could have produced shame and embarrassment when she addressed a frequently tardy student. Calista often used humor in class and did so to address the fact that this particular student often came late because he would stop at McDonalds to pick up his dinner. In order to address this, she made jokes about the fact that he would come late and teased him by implying that he did not bring enough food to share with everyone. She shared that this method worked for her because the student stopped bringing McDonalds and starting coming to class on time.

The other NESTs reportedly tried a variety of methods to confront the issue of shame and embarrassment. They learned that students would shut down if they were called out for their

behaviors, so the teachers modified their responses to adequately communicate with their students. These NESTs all shared that they perceived issues of shame, similar to avoidance of direct conflict to be part of Costa Rican culture. Veronica and Caroline stated that they learned to be less direct in their manner of speaking to protect their students' feelings. These modifications that the teachers made to reduce students' anxieties, encourage them when they were struggling and avoid direct confrontation showed that they were able to develop savoir faire by seeking to understand the layers of students' cultures. They did not expect students to conform to their ways of behaving, such as being more assertive or outspoken.

The NESTs adapted their teaching practice to make class more comfortable for their students which also helped lower the students' affective filters. Lems et al. (2017) argued that good teachers know how to lower their students' affective filters in order to put them at ease and encourage learning. They create a positive, welcoming and affirming environment, and give them choices. This is exactly what the teachers did when they lowered the lights during students' presentations or played music to drown out students' discussions. When they informed certain students that they would need extra English practice, they made sure to find a Spanish speaking colleague to explain it in the students' first language. These efforts to lower students anxieties and build self-confidence helped lower their affective filters.

Teachers' Responses to Controversial Topics and Practices

Because one of the goals of TEFL is to get students speaking as much as possible, teachers searched for topics that excite students to speak, including some that were controversial. While controversial topics can provide an impetus for fruitful discussion, in many Costa Rica classrooms, the teachers expressed a lack of engagement by their students. This may be tied to the previously discussed cultural practice of avoiding confrontation. It is also attributed to the affective variables that prevent students from engaging in class and learning. Caroline discussed

that when a conversation began to get too heated, she would redirect the class by introducing humor or providing a gentle reminder of the errors that she heard during the conversation. Another strategy she used was simply stopping the discussion and changing the activity. She noted that when a conversation turned to an argument, students stop learning, they risked being angry with each other, and this may ruin the family environment she strived to achieve.

Timothy also noted that he quickly learned to avoid some topics in particular because his students would not engage in them. For example, he noted that topics such as same-sex marriage and politics during the Costa Rican elections were topics which his students would not discuss. He felt that the students knew there would be disagreements in the classroom and would not want the discussion to get too heated, and therefore refused to discuss those issues. Ultimately, he realized that he did not want to start spouting his own beliefs, because his role was to teach English, not politics. Additionally, he did not want to offend or ostracize any of his students by sharing his opinion on a controversial topic. Caroline felt that it was not necessary to discuss politics and religion to have good conversation and that often teachers who were new to the TEFL field might resort to those topics to try to generate conversation.

As discussed by Granados-Beltrán (2016), teachers must not introduce popular teaching methods and activities without critically considering the way that their students' sociocultural identities may be impacted and how differences in the classroom may come into play with one another. Teachers should be prepared to address the potential conflicts that could arise in the classroom. It appears from the reflections shared by NESTs here and the experiences they heard from other NESTs that in many Costa Rican classrooms, teenage and adult students do not wish to engage in political or other controversial conversations. During topics like same-sex marriage, the NESTs did not identify if any of their students shared their sexual orientations. However,

there is a possibility with such a topic of conversation that some of their students' sociocultural identities might be discussed disparagingly in the classroom. That likely could be the case given that the center received hundreds of students every week who are not part of a monolithic culture and who have varying identities and beliefs. Many of the teachers (Robert, Timothy and Calista) felt that it was their main role to teach English and not push their own personal beliefs and values on their students, so they also did not want to participate in the controversial topic discussions. Thus, it appeared that most of the teachers learned from these controversial conversations to avoid them.

Veronica and Caroline shared that it was common in Costa Rican culture to refer to someone as "fatso" ("gordo" in Spanish) or "the skinny girl" ("la flaca" in Spanish). Additionally, they argued that all individuals of Asian descent are referred to as "chinese person," ("Chino" in Spanish) and sometimes a pejorative word for a gay man ("playo" in Spanish) was used. Except for "playo," these words were not meant to disparage the individual in Costa Rican culture, but the NESTs felt that they were not appropriate to use in their home communities. From their personal experiences and worldview, they thought that this manner of referring to people was at times problematic. The way in which Veronica and Caroline addressed this issue was different. Veronica stated that while she found it interesting, she let the use of labeling individuals slide unless they used racist or sexist language. Caroline argued that she was flexible about many things in her classroom, but would not stand for students using the word "gay" to refer to someone or something in a negative way. Caroline provided a guideline for students by arguing that you could not address people with certain labels in English, that people must ask individuals how they want to be identified. She addressed this topic in class by sharing,

> I feel like it's ... in the society in which we live you really have to ask a person how they preferred to be described and before you start putting a gender on someone, you should ask them how they preferred to be described. Um, before you... you know start talking about people, it's better to get to know them and just... just ask a simple question, "How do you prefer to be described?" and... and... and let them tell you.

The description that Caroline gave of asking an individual how they would like to be described showed her savoir s'engager with the topic of identity. The way she addressed this issue showed that she would not avoid the students or their behavior if they used offensive language, but she explained how to navigate the issue of identity in her cultural experience. This shows Caroline's critical awareness of people's sociocultural identities and her manner of incorporating a critical pedagogy by encouraging her students to consider and inquire about people's identities. Veronica's position not to address the language showed that she was accommodating her students' behaviors and that she did not find them to be speaking with bad intentions. However, Caroline exhibited a deeper understanding of intercultural competence by preparing her students for a setting where such labels may not have been appropriate.

As mentioned in chapter four, some of the teachers struggled with the racist language that arose in their classroom. Calista shared that she learned from her Spanish teacher that Costa Ricans do not have the same understanding of racist terms like the "n-word" as U.S. Americans do, since it was not originally part of their culture. Calista's response to this issue was mixed. At one time she reported that she used sarcasm to diffuse the tension, and another time, she simply shut the conversation down. She shared,

> Cause someone had said the n-word in my class... And I just like lost it. And I lost it which spurred them to become worse. Like, just making... like they were laughing over

> me and making black jokes and going off and it was like, “Oh my god!” I didn't even want to see them again. And... um... I realized at that point that because they have no education or experience with this, they know it's wrong which is the only thing I can say is, “You do know it's wrong, so you shouldn't do it. You just don't understand exactly, to the extent of how wrong that is.”
>
> And later on she added,
>
> They hear it in music. They think it's acceptable. They know... like they see black people using that word. They know it's a bad word, they don't understand the conte... the reason why it is so bad. So, I... later on, the topic of black people came up in that class again and someone said something, and I go, “Yeah, I forgot this class is racist.” And I was like, (laughing) and I said it, but ... and they just kind of looked at me and I'm like, ‘That's cool. I forgot I can't talk about black things in this class.’ Because I’ll just get frustrated.

These responses illustrated that Calista wanted her students to understand the severity and history of the “n-word” in the U.S., but also showed that she was unwilling or unable to address the topic to explicate why the racial slur was so hurtful. It showed that she viewed the students, as she described, as racist and therefore, would no longer engage them in the conversation about black culture in the U.S. and people who are black. There were opportunities for raising critical consciousness in the classroom during those moments that were missed. Calista could have developed her savoir s’engager in those moments to address issues of racism. When there is a potential disagreement or misunderstanding in a classroom with multiple sociocultural perspectives, the teacher is called to address and move through the misunderstanding with discussion and reflection (Ryan & Viete, 2009). However, Calista needed to access her savoir faire to reflect on the identities of her students and their personal values as well as her own. By

pulling in extra resources to the classroom in English from the African American perspective, teachers like Calista could engage the students in a discussion of identity differences, values and historical context.

While Veronica and Caroline were able to separate the students from their words and actions, Calista did explicitly refer to her students as racist. Separating students from their words and actions is an important distinction for a critically intercultural teacher to make. Acknowledging that prejudice and discrimination exists in the country or in classrooms is a fair assessment. However, labeling an entire class as racist can create division between the NESTs and their students, which is what happened to Calista. This damaged their relationships and was not a fair assessment of the students as a whole.

Another time in which Calista used humor to defuse a conflict was when she faced machismo in the class. Calista did not want to ostracize her male students who exemplified machismo, but would not be afraid to bring humor and sarcasm to the situation in order to address chauvinistic behavior or comments. She believed that one of her students who exhibited machismo in the classroom was just overcompensating because he was intimidated by women. However, she also knew that she should temper her use of sarcasm so as not to offend any students. Similar to Calista, Robert shared that it was necessary to address the instances of chauvinistic behavior in the classroom. If he encountered a man disrespecting a woman in public, he would call them out for it and make them feel embarrassed. Yet, since he would not do that with his students in the classroom, he would ask them, “what would your mother say?” He did this in order to look out for the emotional safety of the rest of his students in the class. These two teachers faced instances of machismo differently in their classrooms, but were sure not to let offenses go unaddressed.

Differing beliefs were also controversial issues that NESTs faced while teaching in Costa Rica. Caroline stated that while Costa Rica was generally considered a Catholic country, it had a variety of belief systems and norms. She shared that despite the large Catholic presence, there were also students of different religions in the class and many that did not believe in a god. For any given holiday, there were a variety of different cultural norms and ways to celebrate. She was adaptable to the varying religious and cultural beliefs and customs in her classes. Some of her students were Jehovah's Witnesses, and they did not celebrate holidays or birthdays. This understanding shaped her teaching because when the class reached the textbook chapter about holidays, she shared that she must prepare ahead of time to be fair to the students who identified as Jehovah's Witness and therefore did not celebrate holidays. This exemplified that she was being culturally sensitive to her students' backgrounds.

Another way in which Caroline adapted to be culturally sensitive was during the Halloween season. She shared that many Costa Ricans do not celebrate Halloween because of religious beliefs against the holiday. While some of her fellow NESTs argued that Halloween was part of their own culture and they wished to share that with students, Caroline, on the other hand, understood that some students, especially the parents of their students in the children's classes, viewed Halloween as religiously offensive. That was why she did not persist in celebrating Halloween at the language and cultural center. Her reflection on cultural traditions and Costa Rican values and beliefs exhibited a critical understanding of the concept of culture and a respect towards those who viewed holidays differently than she did.

The lack of participation and tensions that arose from controversial topics or activities are common to TEFL classrooms (Kerdchoochuen, 2011; Ryan & Viete, 2009). Kerdchoochuen (2011) addressed some common dialectical tensions that can arise between NESTs and ELLs

including being open or closed off from personal discussions and opinions. Some individuals are open to sharing personal and private matters with their teachers, while others are more closed off from disclosing such matters. This also applies to public classroom discussions with personal opinions. Kerdchoochuen argued that teachers and students have to negotiate how much they are willing to disclose to one another and how direct to be with one another. She also noted that NESTs are often very direct and expressive and this can be difficult for ELLs if they are not used to speaking directly and openly with others, particularly their English teacher. As mentioned in the previous chapter, some teachers and students exemplified their openness to discussing their personal lives outside of class time with each other. However, it became apparent in class discussions that certain topics were considered off-limits for the classroom. The students may feel uncomfortable with the feelings, disagreements or reactions that can arise during controversial discussions and activities, and this can raise their affective filter.

As the NESTs learned this characteristic about many of their students, they changed their behavior towards topics and activities. Instead of expecting students to participate in controversial topics, which they expressed disinterest in doing, the teachers practiced the strategy of selection that Kerdchoochuen (2011) proposed. Selection means choosing to honor one side of a tension, rather than negotiating between the two sides. In this case, avoiding controversial topics altogether rather than discussing them was an example of selecting to honor students' feelings and apprehensions. By selecting to discontinue controversial topics or practices such as Halloween, the teachers respected the students' desires to be less direct and avoid conflict with their classmates and their teacher. The NESTs were thus able to create a more welcoming and intercultural space for their students.

Teachers' Professional Support in TEFL

The NESTs stated that a variety of sources helped them improve their teaching practice, such as other NESTs, other language teachers, TEFL instructors and community members. Many aspects of the TEFL certificate preparation programs assisted the teachers to adapt to their students' needs and expectations. Caroline stated that TEFL School 1, where she obtained her certificate, taught her how to appropriately navigate the professional setting in Costa Rica. For example, to be taken seriously as a NEST, one must dress well, smell nice and maintain good hygiene. Looking and smelling nice, she shared, showed that a teacher was prepared, and this fostered more respect from students. Meeting students' cultural expectations by presenting oneself in the local cultural norms are ways that NESTs can show they take their job seriously and wish to please their students (Snow & Campbell, 2017).

The TEFL School 1 resource book warned pre-service teachers against looking like they just visited the beach when they go to an interview (Anonymous 1, 2016). Caroline argued that students are usually well dressed, well-kept and smell nice. In the language and cultural center bathroom, a sign was posted that read, "Please use antiperspirant. Here in the tropics, deodorant alone won't cut it. Please be considerate of your classmates." This reminder, in both English and Spanish, showed the importance of being clean and smelling nice in the classroom. The presence of the sign also indicated that it was necessary to remind the guests of the school, many of whom are guests to Costa Rica, to be considerate of others and smell nice. Smelling bad was thus considered offensive to others, and those who are guests to Costa Rica should take note. The NESTs who obtained their TEFL certificate from TEFL School 1 were taught this custom, and some of them argued that they made an extra effort to behave accordingly.

Caroline found that talking to her Tico neighbors and husband in both English and Spanish helped her learn how to be a better teacher. She argued that she learned how to use what

was called the “starter voice” for beginner level learners, which she described as speaking at a slow pace, enunciating and not using difficult jargon or slang. When she spoke to them in English, she learned that she needed to break down difficult concepts and explain them in a simplified manner. Assuring that the teacher was speaking at a rate that students can understand is an important way to engage ELLs (Yang, 2018). She also learned from her neighbors and husband’s family that Tico students may not want to admit to their teacher that they do not understand, fearing that that they would disappoint their teacher.

Maryanne shared that she learned to read students’ responses when they did not understand, because they would rarely tell a teacher directly that they did not understand. Therefore, Maryanne learned to read their delay to answer questions as misunderstanding them, as well as when they produced grammar points incorrectly. She knew that to ask, “Does everyone understand?” did not provide a teacher with a definite answer of understanding. This was outlined in the TEFL School 1 resource book which offered suggestions to check the students’ understanding. Maryanne used those suggestions and made quick adjustments to activities and came up with additional practices to enhance their understanding. She would ask them to repeat back what they learned, teach each other, or she developed mini quizzes to see if they understood the lesson. When they did not, she stated that she was quick to add an extra activity or explain the grammar points again.

Learning what activities, behaviors and guidelines are culturally appropriate from local teachers and local informants can benefit a NEST who is otherwise an outsider to the educational system in the new country (Barratt & Kontra, 2000). Some of the teachers noted that they also learned how to be better teachers by adopting strategies and activities from the teachers in the Spanish department. Their experiences of being Spanish students helped them build relationships

with teachers in the Spanish department, most of whom were Costa Ricans. Robert shared that he learned a great deal about Costa Rican history in the Spanish classes and that shaped some of the ways he taught English to his Costa Rican and other Latin American students. Timothy stated that because he spent the majority of his Spanish classes laughing, he was reminded to use playful activities and have fun in his English classroom. He also appreciated that there was enough time to have conversations in class and that not all the time was consumed by learning vocabulary. Veronica learned a game in her Spanish classes that she used frequently in her English classes. By being students in Costa Rican language classrooms, the NESTs not only learned new activities to use in class, but they also learned how language classes are conducted in Costa Rica. They learned how to teach with culturally appropriate activities and the acceptable ways to interact with students.

Teachers' Responses to Cheating and Plagiarism

In accordance with Hofstede's (2011) six dimensions of culture, some of the NESTs noted an aspect of Costa Rican culture that demonstrated the tendency towards collectivism rather than individualism, cheating and plagiarism. The TEFL School 1 resource book stated that in collectivist societies, the students learn to work cooperatively so that everyone achieves success (Anonymous 1, 2016). Therefore, plagiarism and cheating is viewed differently in Costa Rican than it is in the U.S., Canada or England. Caroline succinctly stated,

> It's interesting that this is a culture of sharing everything and so they definitely cheat on exams; what we consider to be cheating, but they don't consider it to be cheating. They're just merely checking their answer, and it's completely accepted in this culture.
>
> That's...that's something that I've really had to... to just kind of mellow out on.

Both Caroline and Calista reported that they adjusted their responses to students who they guessed had cheated on a test or homework assignment or who plagiarized a paper. Calista

shared her experience working with a student that she confidently believed plagiarized a paper for her class. She knew that he was not capable of using high level grammar points that were included in his paper because he had struggled with introductory level sentences. Instead of punishing him, she took time to understand why the student plagiarized the paper and focused more on the fact that the student was falling behind in the class. Ultimately, she referred the student to the STAR program where he could get extra help and attention to improve his English, and build his confidence. This adjusted response to the problem, as well as Caroline's claims to "mellow out" on issues of cheating show that the teachers adjusted their attitudes towards student behavior and were understanding of cultural differences. These responses from two teachers from the U.S. towards what they considered cheating shows that they have utilized their savoirs and savoir faire to recognize that their students hold a different perspective on cheating and plagiarism, and that the teachers can choose to respond differently as they learn to work in a context outside their home cultures.

Teachers' Efforts for Students of Low Socioeconomic Status

While many of the students that are able to afford classes at the language and cultural center pay a lot of money to be students, they may not all be wealthy individuals. However, the luxury of being able to afford English classes and a private language and cultural center is still a privilege that not all Costa Ricans enjoyed. Some of the teachers had experience working with students of low socioeconomic status who started class with a very low level of English proficiency. While many students at the language and cultural center start beginner level classes knowing a few English words and have been exposed to English in music or television, other students, especially those of low socioeconomic means, "had never heard English before," as Maryanne described.

Maryanne had taught English at a summer camp in a coastal city for underprivileged youth. She noted that there were very few resources for herself and the students, and that her fellow teachers were very inexperienced and unprepared. Teachers were provided only with dry erase markers and a whiteboard, and students did not bring papers and pencils. The youth she taught there were learning English before starting high school where they would be learning alongside other students who would reportedly have higher levels of English proficiency. Maryanne noted that teaching in that environment was more difficult than teaching at the language and cultural center where she worked because the students and their community had very few resources. Maryanne stated that she brought her own supplies to provide for the students, bought a copy machine to make photocopies of classroom materials and brought her own laptop to use in class for certain activities. She also shared that there was no one to manage the teachers. Therefore, she ended up managing and guiding the other NESTs at the camp who greatly needed her guidance. She adapted to this difficult situation by altering her lessons so that they required few resources, at the same time mentoring new teachers. This situation strengthened her skills of resourcefulness and flexibility.

Caroline and Robert both worked with the Puertas Abiertas program, teaching single, low-income mothers. They both shared that it was more difficult to teach the students in this program than some of their other classes. While all of the teachers sympathized with the busy lives and work schedules of their students, the students in the Puertas Abiertas program were viewed as having even more obstacles that prevented them from practicing English. They were parents who needed additional support for their children, and some had to juggle work responsibilities with caring for their children. Caroline believed that not all the students in this program had finished high school and noted that one had dropped out of school after third grade.

She said that it was more difficult for the students in this program to retain information than in her other classes. Because she perceived the students progressing more slowly than other classes, Caroline knew that she had to teach lessons more slowly when teaching in the Puertas Abiertas program and to use more repetition in activities. She used her skills of improvisation to quickly amend her lessons when she knew additional practice was needed.

Robert was the head of the Puertas Abiertas program, which consisted of teaching the classes every Friday, and assisting pre-service NESTs teach their practicum hours with such students. Robert argued that the students were very eager to learn and to be good examples for their children. However, he said that they had more trouble comprehending the lessons than his other classes, which is why he resorted to using some occasional Spanish in those classes. He argued that he did not want to leave some students behind when others were beginning to understand.

It was apparent from the experiences of Robert, Caroline and Maryanne that students of low socioeconomic means had less exposure to English than students of higher socioeconomic means. Therefore, it would have been helpful for the teachers to speak some Spanish to bridge the linguistic gap. Villalobos Ulate (2014) found that many Costa Ricans preferred to have a NNEST for beginner level classes. One reason for this preference is to explain grammar in Spanish. Thus, using some Spanish at the beginner level is important, especially when the students have very little exposure to English. Robert and Timothy shared this perspective and argued that they used it at times in their beginner classes. This was an example of the teacher working within the students' ZPD. As the teachers assessed their students' levels of English proficiency and levels of experience as a student, they found the knowledge and skills the students already had in order to build on them. Through their sociocultural lens, NESTs might be

able to use pedagogical tools such as use of the first language to help the students build their English speaking skills. Using some Spanish to address students with little to no exposure to English was an accommodation that Robert and Caroline could provide to work within their ZPD. While all of the teachers showed ways in which they made an extra effort to accommodate their students' needs, not all believed in using Spanish as a tool.

Teachers' Responses to Spanish in the Classroom

All the teachers reported that the use of Spanish was not allowed in English classes at the language and cultural center. The ideology behind that policy is that students should maximize the time that they have to speak English in the classroom and immerse themselves in the language for the limited amount of time that they have with their teachers and classmates each week. Students met for class for just three hours a week in an economic class, six hours a week in a regular class and 12 hours a week in an intensive class. Most students attended the economic class, and therefore, only had three structured hours a week to speak English. The teachers generally considered students speaking Spanish in the classroom as a problem and shared tips with one another to curtail it. When students needed to know what a word meant, the teacher gave a rich and lengthy description in English so as to encourage thinking in English rather than translating. However, many students still relied on their English-Spanish dictionaries and their classmates to provide a quick translation for a given word or concept. Caroline argued that students should never have to use Spanish in the classroom, that they should not be directly translating from Spanish to English. She argued that this would stunt their growth in English. She did not provide a reference for that claim.

Many sources have claimed that some use of the first language in the classroom is normal and helpful (Childs, 2016; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007; Macaro & Lee, 2013; Moore, 2013; Şener & Korkut, 2017). This act of using their first language to mediate their foreign language learning is

a practice supported by sociocultural theorists (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). Teachers who know or are in the process of learning the native language of their student show a respect for their language and are able to make clear connections in class (Lems et al., 2017). Moore (2013) argued that students work well together in their first language in order to make sense of the target language. Therefore, the use of Spanish to prepare for an activity or ensure understanding of instructions would not be considered a problem. However, most of the teachers tried to prevent such use of Spanish.

Some of the teachers initially said that they did not use Spanish in the classroom, but upon further discussion explained how and when they would use it with limitations. Robert felt that at times it was necessary to speak Spanish in the children's classes or in the Puertas Abiertas program because those students often did not understand what was happening in class. He also spoke Spanish to misbehaving students to inquire what was going on underneath their behavior to truly understand why they were struggling. He did not want students to fall behind so he translated some English words into Spanish, especially when they are helpful cognates like "elephant" and "elefante." Robert reported that by saying "respect is very important," or "no violence," to the students in his children's classes, they could understand what he meant because many of those words are cognates in English and Spanish. To say "respect is very important," in Spanish, one would say "el respeto es muy importante." To express "no violence," in Spanish, one would say "no a la violencia" (my translation). As the children hear those words in English, they sound similar to Spanish, therefore making the directions easier for the children to understand than, "Don't hit each other," which in Spanish is, "No se golpeen." The use of cognates between English and Spanish that have the same meaning is an example of positive cross linguistic influence. Lems et al. (2017) argued that teachers who know the native language

of their students can offer such examples of cognates to advance students' proficiency. While Robert did not explicitly state that the words were similar in English in Spanish, he knew that the students would be more likely to understand them because the were cognates.

Timothy also used some Spanish in class. He stated that one can save a lot of time by allowing students to ask the teacher how to say a Spanish word in English. He did not allow full conversations in Spanish, however, he felt that it was helpful when students used a few words in Spanish for the purpose of learning English. He also occasionally spoke Spanish to explain a few rules to the introductory level classes and to redirect younger students who had a lot of energy. Using Spanish for discipline is another reason that a teacher may use Spanish in the class. One way Timothy showed the students who were acting up that he was serious was giving them a direction in Spanish such as asking them to calm down. Macaro and Lee (2013) argued that using the first language in the classroom can be especially useful to give quick instructions and to manage behavior. Speaking to the students in their first language helps get their attention, which is why asking students to calm down in their first language may be the best way to do so. Additionally, as Timothy noted and Macaro and Lee attest, giving simple instructions in the first language saves time and lessens confusion. When it is important to conduct an activity in the target language, there is no need to waste time trying to understand the instructions in the target language.

The NESTs also shared how their knowledge of Spanish (whether they hardly knew it or spoke proficiently) affected their teaching. Five of the teachers, including those who stated that they did not speak Spanish, reported that they could foresee certain grammatical errors based on cross-linguistic transfer. Maryanne was a teacher who reportedly spoke very little Spanish. However, after other NESTs took Spanish classes, they would share with her and the other

teachers the things they learned about Spanish that would lead students to make certain errors. One of the most common errors is when students say “I have 37 years,” instead of, “I am 37 years old,” because they are using the Spanish grammatical structure for expressing age - “tengo 37 años.” Caroline shared that the common errors made by her students helped her learn Spanish. For example, the phrase “make a decision” creates cross-linguistic interference for Spanish and English speakers. Yet, Caroline used this to her advantage.

> Caroline: I was having a conversation with Alonso, who is the head of the Spanish department. And well... I think it was a level test, or something. And I just guessed, I'm like, “I had to make a decision.” And I was like, "Yo tuve que tomar la decisión." And he was like, “Uh-huh, that's correct.” And I was like, “Yeah!” Because they always say “take the decision.”
>
> Emily: Yes. yes.
>
> Caroline: So I turned their errors, their common errors in class... I think, “oh my gosh they're translating from Spanish. So in Spanish it must be this...” And I just guess and then everyone's like, “Yeah that's correct.” And I'm like, “Oh! It's amazing.”

Like Robert’s use of cognates, Caroline’s realization here of structural linguistic differences was an example of building metalinguistic awareness of Spanish and English. Metalinguistic awareness is the ability to think about the structure and components of a language in addition to the meanings of words (Lems et al., 2017). Recognizing false cognates, helpful cognates and structural nuances helped the teachers understand Spanish and English. They were utilizing savoir comprendre to make such connections between the languages. However, it would be helpful if they shared such tips with their students. Making students aware of such structural differences and similarities would help them learn and retain English.

Rao (2010) found in a study of Chinese ELLs that the students desired their teachers to explain commonalities and differences between their first language and English. Caroline had learned that to say "make a decision" in Spanish, one would translate the phrase "take a decision," from English. That knowledge can help students avoid making a mistake by acknowledging that the phrase is different in English and Spanish. Additionally, if teachers knew that grammatical structures such as the past perfect were similarly used in English and Spanish, this explanation could reduce confusion for students and save time in the grammar presentation.

Five out of the six NESTs reported that they used their level of Spanish to their advantage in the classroom, no matter what level they had. Caroline said that she used her high level of Spanish to check students' Spanish written notes and listen to what they say under their breath to their classmates in Spanish as a way to check for understanding. She said that without using her proficiency in Spanish, she would never have been able to truly tell if her students understood the little nuances within certain concepts and the difference between connotative and denotative definitions. She also recognized that students would not be honest with a teacher if they did not understand. Asking students if they understand will result in a "yes" response, regardless if they really understand or not. She stated that the students did not want to admit that they do not understand something, because they do not want to disappoint the teacher. In fact, her students have apologized to her if she knew that they did not understand. However, she affirmed that after years of teaching in Costa Rica, she was beginning to learn how to read in their eyes when they say that they understood, but in reality, they did not.

Maryanne and Veronica insisted that their introductory level of Spanish forced their students to find new and different ways to communicate in English. When students do not know a specific word in English, they must explain what they mean using other English words they

know. For example, instead of a student asking their teacher, “How do you say *taza* (cup) in English?” Students would ask, “How do you say the thing you use to drink?” This challenges them to find extra words, and therefore they get extra practice in English. Maryanne also found that in her children’s class, they worked together to figure out how to explain something to their teacher in English. While this was a helpful tactic for students to use in order to practice more English, it provided the teacher with an out for learning their first language. It could also cause confusion if the teacher does not offer multiple answers. The “thing you use to drink” could be a mug, a cup, a glass, among many other options. This is a time when direct translation may reduce confusion.

Building positive relationships with students in their first language is not only a great way to motivate them (Childs, 2016; Şener & Korkut, 2017), but also a way to bond with them (Yang, 2018). None of the teachers explicitly stated that learning Spanish would help them be a better TEFL teacher. While many of the teachers noted that they utilized the Spanish-speaking support staff at the language and cultural center to communicate difficult conversations with their students, they did not argue that having those conversations themselves may help build trust with those students or develop stronger teacher-student relationships. Calista shared that when she tried to talk to one of her students about his progress in class, that he could not understand what she was saying and started to well up with tears. That conversation would have been better held in Spanish so that the student could understand and ask questions in his first language. Macaro and Lee (2013) found that it is important for students to be able to express themselves in their first language and to ask clarifying questions. If the NESTs offered words of support and guidance in their students’ first language, this would ease the pain of learning that they are not progressing at the appropriate rate and nurture a relationship between the teacher and students.

Discussion

Remembering that culture has many layers, it is important for teachers to recognize the intersecting identities of their students and the social distances that existed between them because of those intersecting identities (Arriaza & Wagner, 2012; Guilherme, 2002). As privileged native speakers from Canada, England and the U.S., the NESTs were developing intercultural competence as they spent more time learning about Costa Rica and their individual students. Most of them illustrated that they viewed their role as TEFL teachers with importance and regarded their students as more than just language learners, but as dynamic individuals with multiple needs and identities. Through this recognition, they exhibited how they were able to make accommodations for the diverse needs of students and the areas in which they needed to grow. This final theme illustrates two of the research questions by exemplifying how NESTs' understand their students' culture and therefore adapt to students' needs and behavior, as well as demonstrating how NESTs perceive and respond to the influences of English and U.S. American culture in Costa Rica.

In difficult situations, new teachers who lack intercultural competence may use strategies from their own worldview to address the issue and expect students to acquiesce (Salmona, Partlo, Kaczynski, & Leonard, 2015). Based on what they discussed in the interviews, when the NESTs faced conflict with their students, they sometimes resorted to their own cultural lens. In those moments, they had an opportunity to develop savoir faire, and they sometimes addressed the issues in the manner that Kerdchoochuen (2011) outlined. Kerdchoochuen shared that when teachers and students come from different cultural backgrounds, their expectations for the classroom are likely different. The strategies that NESTs can use to address dialectical tensions between them and their students included mediating tensions on either side of the conflict, honoring various parts of the conflict at different times, redefining or reframing the conflict, or

responding with indifference. Utilizing these strategies can strengthen teacher-student relationships, especially when the tension or difference of opinion is associated with strong personal values.

Conflicts and differences of opinion are common to intercultural classrooms (Nieto & Booth, 2010; Ryan & Viete, 2009), as was the case for the NESTs in this study. Calista and Veronica expressed great frustration and even anger when their students used racist, homophobic or other discriminatory terms in the classroom. In the moments when Calista refused to engage with her students on certain topics, she showed that she was in need of these strategies. This was evident in the way that Calista addressed the issues of racism and machismo in her classroom. Under pressure, she resorted to sarcasm and avoidance. She either disregarded her students or shut down a discussion. However, with more practice in addressing conflict and negotiating a third space where both her cultural background and the students' cultural background can come together, she could find ways that she and the students together can view such issues and come to an agreement about how to discuss them in the classroom. This negotiated space makes classroom interactions educationally challenging and encourages respect for all stakeholders (Ryan & Viete, 2009). It would allow her and other NESTs facing tensions to redefine and reframe issues such as racism and sexism in the classroom. Veronica, on the other hand, responded with indifference when she said that she would let certain comments go unchecked in class. Caroline also said that she would not stand for discriminatory terms, but understood her students' opinions thereby attempting to mediate the tensions on either side of the conflict. Veronica and Caroline also made the effort to reframe the conflict in class by explaining to students that in their personal cultural backgrounds, identity markers such as a person's skin color or ethnicity are not used casually or without respectful consultation with the person being

discussed. This education component of the class discussion served to explain their perspective and raise critical consciousness in their students.

Embodying savoir être includes being adaptable (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002). The teachers' willingness and abilities to make adjustments for their students showed that they were adaptable. Many teachers shared that their TEFL certificate programs prepared them to teach with very few resources. They noted that the majority of the classes they taught at the language and cultural center had smart boards and access to previously prepared lessons. These classes were not very difficult because of the ways their TEFL courses extensively prepared them. However, when they were placed in schools or classrooms with students of low socioeconomic status or less formal educational experience, they learned to adapt to serve their students. Those skills of adapting and persevering can be attributed to their growing savoir faire. Developing their teaching skills in an intercultural context means that the NESTs encounter students with intersecting identity markers. As Guilherme (2012) argued, this requires that teachers learn from the multiple identities and create common grounds for their students and themselves to build linguistic and cultural understanding. As Caroline, Maryanne, Robert and Timothy experienced, teaching English to individuals with little to no educational resources created barriers to language education. Additionally, students with very little exposure to English and little formal educational experience would benefit by the NESTs speaking their native language (Şener & Korkut, 2017). This would have allowed them to find more ways to relate to those students and explain English in a way they could understand.

The NESTs often spoke about the students' desire to learn English in order to get better jobs, but they did not often address the injustice within that fact. Solano Campos (2012) noted that not only does speaking English provide better employment opportunities, but that using

Standard U.S. American English and Standard British English further increases workers' access to power and promotions. Córdoba González (2011) questioned whether some Costa Ricans can pull themselves out of poverty without secondary or tertiary education, but with proficiency in English. This possibility further disadvantages those without access to English because classes are more abundant within certain areas of the country. While these issues were not addressed by the teachers, one shared that a student questioned the need to speak English when other languages in the world may soon rise to global popularity. This critical reflection in classes not only provided an interesting topic of discussion, it also raises the critical consciousness needed in the TEFL field.

Critical consciousness entails an ability to deeply understand human relationships and respond to them. Because humans are relational, they must respond to the world around them, and critique the injustices that they see and experience (Freire, 2005). By promoting certain ways of speaking as "the way a native speaker would say it," the NESTs at times promoted native speaker elitism. However, this elitist ideology to sound like a native speaker marginalizes those who speak non-standard English varieties or with non-standard accents (Aslan & Thompson, 2017; Solano Campos, 2014). Because the NESTs worked in an institution that hired only NESTs, it also promoted the native speaker elitist ideology. Therefore, the NESTs are challenged to deconstruct and understand deeply the act of English education in Costa Rica as it lends itself to privileges and injustices. As these NESTs continued to reflect on their time in Costa Rica and on their role in the field of TEFL, they learned that adapting and unlearning was essential to their success. Continuing to live, learn and teach in Costa Rica will ideally lead to wider perspectives on their roles in TEFL and as intercultural speakers.

Chapter 7
Conclusion
Developing Intercultural Competence: Implications for the field of TEFL

Foreign language classrooms are sites of intercultural meaning making. There are opportunities for students and teachers alike to learn from one another in this sociocultural process. In this research project, I investigated how NESTs who travel to a new country learn about their students' language and culture and how that understanding as well as teacher-student relationships played a role in the TEFL classroom. This qualitative case study was pursued to understand how NESTs experience and adapt to Costa Rica as they teach English to ELLs. Looking at the data with a critical pedagogical lens, guided by sociocultural theory and the intercultural communicative competence model, three themes emerged from the data that illustrated the TEFL experience for NESTs as they strengthened teaching skills, intercultural competences and critical thinking skills. The themes are 1.) Teachers' perceptions of and adaptations to Costa Rica, 2.) Teachers' perceptions of and interactions with their students, and 3.) Teachers' attitudes towards TEFL and responses to students' needs in the TEFL classroom.

The theme "Teachers' perceptions of and adaptations to Costa Rica," addressed the research question that inquires about NESTs' perceptions of and adaptations to their host country and how that shapes their teaching practice and question three as it addresses how NESTs perceive and respond to the influences of U.S. American culture in Costa Rica. The second theme "Teachers' perceptions of and interactions with their students" addressed the research question that inquires about NESTs' understanding of their students' culture and how that shapes their teaching practice. The third theme, "Teachers' attitudes towards TEFL and responses to students' needs in the TEFL classroom" addressed the research questions, as it illustrates the NESTs' responses to English and U.S. American culture in Costa Rica, in addition to showing how NESTs adapt to their students' needs and behaviors.

Critical Pedagogy in the TEFL Field

Through the analysis of TEFL certificate program materials, websites, NESTs' instructional materials and transcripts of interviews with NESTs, there appears to be a need for further incorporation of critical pedagogy in the TEFL field. The NESTs in this study participated in many experiences to learn more about their host community, and most entered into relationships that taught them about Costa Rica and TEFL. Some of the NESTs provided critical understandings of the power and privileges associated with their identities as foreigners from western countries, and others had opportunities to learn more about those privileges through relationships with students and other Costa Ricans. Some of the NESTs addressed and critiqued the growing influence of U.S. American culture in Costa Rica, and noted the need for students to develop English proficiency in order to obtain better jobs.

The teachers shared that our conversations helped them reflect on their teaching practice and raised questions that they had not previously considered. This reflective practice helps exercise the savoir s'engager that NESTs may develop in their host country. Critical reflections help NESTs adjust their way of viewing themselves and their new host countries, which is necessary for a NEST in transition to a new country. As they reflect on the ways in which their sociocultural backgrounds shape their ways of thinking, being and behaving, they must also learn about the ways in which their new host community thinks, believes and behaves (Duff & Uchida, 1997). This can reveal to NESTs how visitors to that community are expected to behave, leading to respectful behaviors and positive transitions.

Implications for teacher preparation in TEFL certificate programs.

As integral stakeholders in the field of TEFL, NESTs must reflect on their teaching positions as careers or as short-term jobs. Unfortunately, TEFL certificate programs promote TEFL positions primarily as a way to travel and make money, with only a minor emphasis on the

position as a part of a TEFL career. However, with only 100-200 required hours of study, these organizations offer less time to prepare and practice than a college preparatory program. The implications of such promotional materials for TEFL certificate programs that lack a critical stance mean that pre-service TEFL teachers enter the field with the notion that their role is temporary and requires little training. Instead, promoting TEFL certificates as a learning experience for teachers to grow in their profession as educators, and to learn more about a culture outside of their own would attract teachers who are invested in education.

It would behoove TEFL certificate programs to teach pre-service students about the impact of English language education on communities across the world and the limited access many people have to English classes. One of the TEFL certificate programs (Anonymous 1, 2016) reviewed in this study gave a short description of the global role of English, but did not include a critical analysis of English domination at the expense of minoritized languages, nor the pressure many countries and students experience to make political and economic gains by learning English. In that program, TEFL teachers may be left without an understanding of non-standard varieties of English, accent discrimination and non-native speaker discrimination. By including critical analysis of the historical dissemination of English, non-standard English varieties and discrimination based on linguistic skills and accent, curriculum designers and instructors for TEFL preparation courses can raise pre-service teachers' awareness on these issues prevalent to the field of TEFL. Critical analysis regarding the influences of English, Standard English, native speaker biases and accents should be reviewed in such preparatory courses, as well as the privileges and power NESTs have in the TEFL field. Inviting ELLs to share their experiences and stories that exemplify not only the positive aspects of English foreign

language education, but also the struggles they experience, would provide the teachers with a fuller picture of the ELL's experience.

Implications for instruction and materials.

Leonard (2015) argued that Western influences maintain control over TEFL teacher education, instructional materials, and teaching methods. Allowing for more voices in the TEFL field requires letting go of the preference for native speakers and also calls for a review of the materials that get published to increase the amount of non-Western and non-native speaker perspectives. Ensuring that there is a diversity of voices in the resources made for ELLs leads to a more critical presentation of how to teach and learn English as a foreign language. As non-native speaking curriculum designers, trainers and educators contribute to the literature in the TEFL field, they broaden the perspectives shared and lead to a greater representation of speakers that are often marginalized. Affirming that non-native English speakers are authorities in the TEFL field challenges the domination of the privileged voices that often hold power. Additionally, NESTs must ensure that the materials used in the classroom positively represent and respect the cultures of their students, thereby creating an environment that is welcoming to student participation and piques their interests. NESTs should include audio and video clips that include people speaking non-standard English varieties and with differing accents, honoring the diversity of English language speakers. This demonstrates to students that non-native English speakers deserve to be heard and respected.

In the TEFL classroom, NESTs are called to be critical of the needs of their multicultural students. Even if the students in the English foreign language classroom speak the same first language, NESTs must be aware of the diversity of cultural backgrounds, experiences and access to resources that the students have. Providing students with multiple options to complete an

assignment or activity is part of the critical approach to instruction and curriculum. Critical pedagogues understand that students have varying access to resources. Therefore, giving them multiple choices to conduct their homework or classwork prevents students with limited resources from expending unnecessary energy or money and from getting discouraged. Options also allow students to avoid topics that might be culturally taboo or irrelevant to their personal needs. Critical NESTs are willing to take such steps in the TEFL classroom.

Implications for program design of language and cultural centers.

Many language and cultural centers across the world, as well as public and private institutions, continue to recruit NESTs over NNESTs (Ruecker & Ives, 2014) and promote more NESTs to higher paid positions than NNESTs. The implications of favoritism shown to NESTs over NNESTs impact teachers and ELLs who deserve strong NNESTs as instructors. This injustice needs to be addressed within those institutions to dispel the native speaker fallacy. Directors of English departments should not be deterred from hiring or promoting NNESTs. The implications for language and cultural centers indicate that there must be a reconceptualization of hiring preferences including recruitment materials that invite NESTs only to apply. Moreover, they must abandon promotional materials to potential students that advertise teachers to be native speakers, which disadvantages NNESTs and promotes prejudice against non-native speakers. If language and cultural centers hire both NESTs and NNESTs, there would be opportunities for both NESTs and NNESTs to be paired together as a teaching team and thereby learn from each other.

Critical consciousness is needed for NESTs in the TEFL field to learn how the host community thinks, believes and behaves, in order for them to understand and adapt to their students' cultural, personal and educational needs. Their continued reflection on how their

teacher-student relationships and interactions impact their students as well as their teaching means that the NESTs are consistently evolving. However, they should be prompted to address issues of power and privilege within the language and cultural center. This calls for curriculum designers and instructors at the language and cultural center to incorporate more critical reflections and inquiry into professional development trainings. Some students who study at language and cultural centers have surplus money in their budgets to pay for English classes, and speaking English proficiently can augment their salaries. In some careers, the gap between those who speak English proficiently and those that cannot reflects the gap between the wealthy and the impoverished. Educating teachers about this disparity in the local communities in which they teach invites them to consider their students' socioeconomic backgrounds and their needs in and outside the TEFL classroom. By creating critical educational sessions with ongoing discussions and articles that address such topics of inequity in the host community, administrators in the language and cultural centers support the development of critical pedagogy.

Sociocultural Theory in the TEFL Field

The data showed how NESTs related to their ELLs and how their interactions and relationships helped them both as TEFL teachers and as outsiders adjusting to a new country. These interactions and relationships served as a base for their own sociocultural development by assisting in their transition to a new country and for some, a new job. The relationships also shaped some of the strategies teachers employed to assist their ELLs' cultural, personal and educational needs. Through the sociocultural analysis of the findings in this study, some implications remain for the TEFL field.

Implications for teacher preparation in TEFL certificate programs.

Part of teacher training includes learning to participate in the Discourse of a TEFL teacher. During the TEFL certificate programs, pre-service teachers learn how to behave, think,

speak, value and use instructional materials to become a TEFL teacher. They learn grammar explanations and methods for TEFL. They may also learn specialized concepts and skills such as teaching youth or business classes. However, these 100-200 hour training courses may not extensively prepare NESTs for their roles in the TEFL classroom. As NESTs learn how to teach English, they must also learn how their sociocultural backgrounds shape the way that they teach and view their students, and how their students' sociocultural backgrounds shape the ways that they learn English and view their teachers. The NESTs also must learn to anticipate potential intercultural conflicts and how to address them. One essential way to build this understanding is to conduct practicum teaching. Practicum teaching serves as a way of scaffolding pre-service teachers' learning of teaching. Some TEFL certificate programs provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to practice teaching ELLs before the completion of their certificate program. This opportunity is not only beneficial to the NESTs, it is necessary to understanding the TEFL classroom, receiving feedback and making improvements to their teaching practice.

Implications for instruction and materials.

Sociocultural theorists argue that language is one of the primary tools that people use to make meaning of their surroundings. In the process of learning additional languages, people rely on their first language to mediate their learning of the target language (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). This means that the first language cannot be erased from the TEFL classroom. The implications of the findings here and in the literature reviewed indicate that TEFL teachers must learn to incorporate the first language in the foreign learning process by providing students with or allowing them to find explanations of the target language in their own language, at least in the beginner levels. While not every TEFL classroom consists of students who speak the same first language, in those that do, it benefits the NEST and the students for the NEST to understand and

make connections between the first and target languages. This calls for NESTs to go through language learning courses not only to learn their students' first language, but also to find ways to incorporate the language and metalinguistic skills into their teaching and to empathize with students.

The NESTs exemplified how they became aware of their students' cultures through the positive interactions and relationships they built with them. As the NESTs got to know their students, they were able to find ways to reach them within their ZPD, discover their interests and appeal to their reasons for studying English. Their teaching practice grew and changed based on their students' needs and behavior. The manners in which they learned about their students were manifold. Many NESTs in this research study noted that their students would shut down and disengage if they felt shame and embarrassment. The emotions of shame and embarrassment contribute to the raising of students' affective filter. As students' affective filter is raised, less language learning occurs. They become blocked from acquiring new vocabulary, grammar and other information, and internalizing the lesson (Krashen, 1981). Therefore, it is essential for NESTs to understand the emotional needs of their students and how to lower each student's affective filter. Utilizing the students' first language is one way to lower their affective filter and raise confidence. This will allow them to not only work within their ZPDs, but also to prevent the students from disengaging.

Teachers utilized assignments and in-class activities to learn more about their students' interests and abilities. Some teachers and students talked before and after class, and others got to know their students further in social settings. These opportunities provided the NESTs with a greater understanding of their students' cultural, personal and educational needs and therefore, they learned to adapt to those needs. This indicates that more textbooks in English foreign

language classrooms should include exercises and activities for students to share information about themselves and their lives. Where it is culturally appropriate, teachers in the TEFL field, particularly NESTs, would benefit from making themselves available to their students outside of class by having designated hours in their institution where students can visit to discuss their work, progress or themselves. Offering such time to students can help teachers build professional relationships with students to get to know their interests, goals and needs.

Implications for program design of language and cultural centers.

Language and cultural centers that hire NESTs are positioned to assist them in their transition to a new community. In addition to the orientation one receives upon arrival at a new place of work, NESTs at language and cultural centers should be guided through the process of an international move, with assistance in finding a place to live, learning how to navigate daily needs in the neighborhood and understanding common expectations of the host culture. The NESTs in this study often relied on social interactions and personal relationships to understand their new setting and survive in it. They were trying to make sense of their new environment through such social interactions. As some of them noted, they received some guidance from the Costa Rican based TEFL certificate programs about living in Costa Rica. However, teachers who obtain their TEFL certification outside their host country do not learn specific cultural norms, social expectations and guidance on how to meet living needs in that country. The teachers should be sent information regarding housing, potential health services available and basic living expectations before their arrival to the country to prepare for a smooth transition, so that they can focus on teaching soon after their arrival. Professional orientations to their new position at a language and cultural center would be strengthened by informational materials regarding cultural

and professional expectations of their host community, as well as ongoing sessions to provide guidance on ways to acclimate to the new community and institution.

To further assist with NESTs transitions to a new country and a new TEFL position, language and cultural centers, private and public institutions can create mentorship programs by matching a senior teacher with a novice teacher. Trained NNESTs as mentors to NESTs would be able to encourage intercultural competency skills and give country specific guidance from the perspective of a local while guiding them through the tribulations of TEFL. NNESTs can provide a unique perspective to NESTs by helping them understand the ELL experience, as well as an insight to local cultural and professional norms and expectations. Trained NESTs who have spent a significant time in the host country can also serve as mentors to novice NESTs by empathizing with the international transition process, and providing guidance on developing TEFL skills, support for adjustments to the new culture and a social outlet to meet others.

Intercultural Communicative Competence in the TEFL Field

Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence was utilized throughout the analysis of data to illustrate how NESTs exemplified savoir être, and how they grew in savoirs, savoir faire, savoir comprendre and savoir s'engager. Their open attitude to move to Costa Rica, persist when the transition got difficult, and their desire to learn Spanish demonstrated the savoir être all six NESTs embodied. Opportunities for them to grow in the other savoirs revealed themselves in many different forms such as interactions on the street, relationships with colleagues, conflicts in the classroom, invitations to explore important celebrations and outings in Costa Rica, among others. In some instances inside and outside the classroom, they developed a third space to negotiate differences between the host cultures and their own. They also learned some cultural awareness skills from their TEFL certificate

programs. This has clear implications for TEFL certificate programs as well as language and cultural centers and institutions that hire new NESTs.

Implications for teacher preparation in TEFL certificate programs.

Five of the six NESTs interviewed received their TEFL certificates in Costa Rica. They all received more information about Costa Rica than Calista, who received her TEFL certificate in an online format from the U.S. The extra time those teachers had to learn about Costa Rica, find a home in Costa Rica and start to build savoirs about Costa Rican norms, values and beliefs gave them an advantage to their start in a new country. TEFL certificate programs have a responsibility to prepare their students to teach in a variety of contexts. When the school is located in the country in which the NESTs teach, they have a closer connection to the home cultures and languages that the NESTs will encounter. Yet, not all NESTs are able to take their TEFL certificate course in the country where they will teach. Therefore, building savoirs, savoir faire, savoir être, savoir comprendre and savoir s'engager in their TEFL certificate courses helps prepare teachers for a variety of intercultural contexts.

The TEFL certificate programs are called to implement intercultural competence trainings during the course and continued support for teachers as they develop their TEFL skills. Because many TEFL schools promote the role of teaching as a way to travel, they often attract people who do not see themselves as lifelong teachers and/or wish to move from one country to the next as they teach English. Therefore, specific information about one country or region would not adequately prepare a teacher for various international teaching positions. Additional information and guidance is needed to assist new teachers in their transitions to new intercultural spaces. TEFL School 1 (Anonymous 1, 2016) provided a short chapter in their resource book about cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural communication. Yet, it fell short on providing them

with the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for crossing international borders and teaching in intercultural spaces. Implementing more activities and trainings to address intercultural conflicts and raise intercultural consciousness would prepare teachers to handle tensions in their workplace, as well as with their students in the classroom. Such trainings allow TEFL certificate instructors to develop savoirs so the pre-service teachers can become critically aware of their own sociocultural identities and worldviews, as well as those of their future students.

Implications for instruction and materials.

The findings here revealed that teachers developed intercultural competence by learning from their students and other Ticos. Students provided great support to their teachers outside the classroom by offering assistance in the form of a ride across town, dental work, Spanish tips and navigating stores in Costa Rica. Students also taught NESTs about Costa Rican culture and common expectations inside the classroom. Through assignments, grammar activities and social conversations, the NESTs grew in savoirs, savoir faire and savoir comprendre. While this benefitted NESTs, there are also opportunities for NESTs to extend the intercultural competence training to their students.

Some of the NESTs in this study revealed that their ELLs were excited to interact with English speakers in a natural setting. At the language and cultural center, the ELLs could often interact with foreign students studying Spanish in social and educational settings. To build ELLs' savoirs, NESTs should intentionally create time for ELLs to interact with English speakers either in person or virtually. ELLs and their NESTs can then reflect on those experiences and discuss how to interact appropriately in different cultural contexts. Through reflection and comparison of the two languages and cultures, the students themselves build savoirs.

NESTs should utilize instructional materials in the TEFL classroom for the development of intercultural competence in their ELLs, as well as themselves. The English textbooks required at the language and cultural center had some chapters dedicated to intercultural communication topics. There were conversation starters regarding non-verbal communications in different cultures, readings about how certain holidays are celebrated across the world and written assignments about finding personal values. These activities were moments for intercultural competency building for both NESTs and ELLs. Increasing such opportunities to discuss cultural differences in English for ELLs helps them build linguistic skills and learn more about other cultures. The discussions also provide NESTs with opportunities to compare and contrast their own culture with others' cultures and analyze such discussions to broaden their perspectives. Such instructional materials should be intentionally included in the TEFL classroom. Additionally, when resources are limited, NESTs can create opportunities for such discussions and written assignments without textbooks.

Implications for program design of language and cultural centers.

The NESTs connected to the community around them and shared how their level of Spanish proficiency helped or hindered their ability to facilitate learning in the classroom. Those that spoke little Spanish acknowledged that speaking Spanish would help them adjust to their community and to the Costa Rican classrooms. As they adjusted to Costa Rica, the NESTs learned that they not only relied on friends to help with the transition, but that they also relied on their linguistic skills. As Lantolf and Thorne (2007) argued, "Language is the most pervasive and powerful cultural artifact that humans possess to mediate their connection to the world, to each other, and to themselves" (p. 201). As the research findings from this study suggest, the NESTs who move to a new country where English is not the dominant language may become language

students at the same time that they are language teachers. The language and cultural center where this study took place offered free Spanish classes to the NESTs, and they all took advantage of the offer. It would be prudent for other language and cultural centers or other educational institutions to offer such services to foreign language teachers. Allowing teachers to learn the language their students speak in their place of work indicates that the institution is invested in cultural exchange, and preparation of multilingual teachers. If NESTs are unable to take classes at their place of employment, it would behoove them to begin the language learning process via free language learning computer programs and further their study through social interactions in their new community. All of the NESTs in this study wanted to learn Spanish to survive in Costa Rica, but some specified that they felt it was important to learn Spanish to deepen their relationships with Spanish-speaking friends and colleagues. They also discovered how knowing certain aspects of Spanish helped them understand their students' behavior.

In this research study, the NESTs who had intermediate to advanced levels of proficiency in Spanish benefitted both the teacher and the students because the teachers were able to have difficult conversations with their students, and the students could express themselves in their own language. Being able to speak in the students' native language is an essential aspect of intercultural communicative competence not just to survive in Costa Rica, but to make connections between the languages in the classroom and have challenging or otherwise intimate conversations with students in their first language. It is an essential piece of developing intercultural communicative competence, and certainly important to being an intercultural speaker and teacher. Therefore, all stakeholders in the TEFL field benefit from multilingual, intercultural teachers and administrators.

Recommendations for Future Research

While the research findings of this study have similarities to findings at other language and cultural centers in Costa Rica or even Latin America, there is a need for further research on the professional development of NESTs and the development of intercultural competence. Exploration into the ways in which NESTs can build intercultural competence in order to transition to a new setting and be better teachers would benefit future NESTs, ELLs and TEFL certificate program designers and instructors. While this research study shed light on the TEFL phenomenon from the perspectives of NESTs, there is also a need to hear from ELLs and their experiences in the TEFL field with NESTs and NNESTs. Many studies (Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Chun, 2014; Han, 2005; Macaro & Lee, 2013; Rao, 2010; Si Thang, 2011; Yang & Chen, 2015) focus on students' perceptions of NESTs as well as comparisons of NNESTs versus NESTS in Asian countries. Yet, there is a need for similar studies that focus on Latin American countries. Further research in Latin American countries would bring awareness to the needs within those countries for critical consciousness and intercultural competence trainings for teachers and administrators.

Countries where English is not the dominant language but is spoken and studied have differing relationships with countries where English is the dominant language, such as the U.S., Canada, England and Australia. Therefore, exploring the various nuances between sociocultural identities of NESTs, NNESTs and ELLs all over the world would benefit stakeholders in the TEFL field to understand how intercultural misunderstandings lead to conflict in the classroom. As this research study affirmed, individuals enter the TEFL classroom from their specific sociocultural location and therefore, conflicts and misunderstandings sometimes arise. Further research is needed to examine the common intercultural misunderstandings that occur in TEFL classrooms, and how TEFL teachers can navigate such situations.

There are many studies (Elboubekri, 2017; González Rodríguez & Borham, 2012; Lázár, 2015; Liaw, 2006; Nguyen, 2011; Wu & Marek, 2018; Yang & Fleming, 2013) that examine the development of intercultural competence of ELLs, and some studies (Harmandaoğlu Baz & İşisağ, 2018; Ortaçtepe, 2015; Strugielska & Piatkowska, 2016) that explore the intercultural competence of NNESTs, but few studies regarding NESTs' development of intercultural competence and the importance of understanding their ELLs' languages and cultures. Further research on this topic would bring awareness to the need for intercultural competence development in NESTs, and address the rigor required for a profession in TEFL. As this research study shows, NESTs benefit from developing the knowledge, skills and attitude to appropriately enter into intercultural spaces. Therefore, additional studies regarding how NESTs can develop such competencies would add pertinent information to the TEFL field.

Concluding Remarks

Uncovering students' beliefs, values and goals helps teachers understand what students say and how they behave. This essential component of intercultural competence builds better relationships between teachers and students. This qualitative case study of NESTs in Costa Rica focused on their development of intercultural competence while teaching English to Latin American ELLs. During the two weeks of research at the language and cultural center, I spent time talking with the NESTs in the English department, as well as Spanish teachers, students and the staff that supports the language departments. I perceived mostly positive attitudes among those who worked there, and observed the community building opportunities for each of the stakeholders in the center. It was apparent in these observations that love of language and cultural exchange abounds at this center, along with experiences of intercultural misunderstandings. While the findings I explicate here cannot be generalized to describe all language and cultural centers, nor all NESTs nor all ELLs, they demonstrate how some NESTs

in Costa Rica teach English and understand their students' cultures, and why this matters in the realm of English foreign language education.

The time I spent with these teachers allowed me to understand their motives for teaching English in Costa Rica, and the joys and struggles they encountered in their classrooms. This helped me understand their teaching philosophy, and how they approached the TEFL classroom. I uncovered the manner in which teachers perceived their students and Costa Ricans, and how they cultivated intercultural competence skills to adapt to their life in a new culture, community and country. Because I used a sociocultural lens and a critical pedagogical perspective, I connected the cultural, linguistic and political components of TEFL that arise inside and outside the language classroom to the NESTs' experiences. I explored how NESTs cultivated these connections and how they perceived this benefited their students. The NESTs exhibited ways in which they grew in intercultural competence, and the changes they made to their teaching practice based on that growth.

Through the participant interviews and the analysis of documents, some implications for the TEFL field became apparent. The TEFL certificate programs that prepare teachers to live and teach abroad must be critical of the ways in which they promote the profession and educate pre-service teachers. They, with the help of the language and cultural centers that hire NESTs, have a responsibility to develop intercultural competence in teachers. The language and cultural center where they teach plays an important role in the hiring of a diverse group of teachers, and in their professional development as interculturally competent teachers. Additionally, as NESTs learn more about the local host community, language and culture, they must incorporate culturally appropriate materials, assignments, activities and ways of interacting with students. They

continue to grow as teachers and intercultural speakers as they invest in their students and in their role as teachers.

Travel and global explorations are glamorous ways to attract more teachers to TEFL, but there are many more enriching reasons to enter into the field. As the NESTs shared in their interviews, TEFL and their time in Costa Rica led them to a deeper understanding of themselves and broadened their knowledge and consciousness of people and cultures that were different from them. They also became more critical thinkers and learned to view English from a different perspective. These experiences were rooted in the sociocultural development of living abroad, not just being a tourist, and critically engaging with the world around them as they developed their intercultural competence skills. What they shared with me often resonated with my own experiences as a NEST in Costa Rica, sometimes challenged my preconceived notions, and further stoked the fire to analyze how TEFL shapes teachers, students and the world.

Appendix A- Interview Protocol

Version: 6.14.18

I am guided by the research question.

1. How do NESTs' understanding of their students' culture shape their teaching practice, and based on this understanding, how do teachers adapt to students' needs and behavior?
2. How do NESTs' perceptions of and adaptations to their host country shape their teaching practice?
3. How do NESTs perceive and respond to the influences of English and U.S. American culture in Costa Rica?

Script for interview:

Introduction & Instructions: *Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. Before we begin I want to explain again the process for this study and what I hope you will gain from it. The purpose of this study is to explore your experience of and your perspectives on teaching English in Costa Rica. There are no right or wrong answers, so please answer as you feel best describes your experience. I want you to be comfortable, so please let me know if you do not feel comfortable with anything we discuss. This is the first round of three interviews. This first interview is to learn about you and your experience with TEFL. The second interview will be to learn more about you as a teacher and your teaching philosophy. The third interview will be a time for you and me both to reflect more on what you have shared and to see how you make sense of teaching English as a foreign language to ELLs.*

Interview 1 Questions

Audio Recording: *I will be recording this so I can review what you said after we are finished. I want to be able to be attentive to our conversation in the moment and still know that I can revisit what we have discussed. This will help me determine additional questions for our subsequent interviews. Do I have your permission to record this interview?*
If no, I will take written notes.

<u>Background Questions.</u>

Where are you from? Can I ask how old you are and what your gender identity is?

How long have you been in Costa Rica? How do you like it?

How long have you been teaching EFL? How do you like it?

In what cities and institutions have you taught?

Have you taught subjects other than EFL?

What made you want to teach EFL?

From which organization or institution did you obtain your TEFL/TESOL certificate?

Would you recommend this organization or institution? Why/why not?

Do you still have access to those materials?

(If yes) Are you able to share them with me? If you are able to share them with me, please email them to me before our next interview or bring them with you to the next interview.

(If no) Can you give me the web address where I can find more information?

NESTs' perceptions and description of their students.

How would you describe some of your favorite students here in Costa Rica?

How would you describe students who challenge you as a teacher?

How are the students similar or different from each other?

How would you describe some common attitudes and beliefs of your Costa Rican students?

When and where do you usually interact with students?

What are these interactions like?

How do you get to know the students in your classes?

Have you taught EFL or ESL outside Costa Rica?

(If yes) How would you describe your students at_____?

How were those students similar or different from each other?

How would you describe some common attitudes and beliefs of your former students?

When and where did you usually interact with those students?

What were these interactions like?

How were you able to get to know the students in your past classes?

(if no) What other occupations have you had?

Did that job prepare you to teach EFL?

How do you compare TEFL and your previous work experience?

Concluding Questions

Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Interview 2 Questions

Audio Recording: *I will be recording this so I can review what you said after we are finished. I want to be able to be attentive to our conversation in the moment and still know that I can revisit what we have discussed. This will help me determine additional questions for our subsequent interviews. Do I have your permission to record this interview?*
If no, I will take written notes.

Introduction & Instructions: *In our last interview we talked about_____. In this second interview, I would like to discuss a little more about your relationship with students, people in your community, and your philosophy as a teacher.*

Follow up from last interview. (Questions will be amended and redeveloped after first interview).

In the last interview, regarding students you said, "...", Can you tell me more about that?

We also discussed..., do you have anything to add to that?

Fellow teachers, staff and local community interactions

Are the students in your class from Heredia?

(If yes) Can you tell me about your interactions with people in the local community? Do you have any interactions or relationships to them?

(If no) Regarding the students that are not from Heredia, have you ever visited their communities? If so, what have your experiences been like in those communities?

What parts of Costa Rica have you visited? What were those places like?

Can you tell me about the ways in which you interact with other members of this language and cultural center? Spanish teachers, dance classes, cooking classes, reception?

Have any of these interactions shaped your teaching?

-(If yes) How so?

-(If no) Do any other relationships in your life shape your teaching?

Language and culture.

Do you speak or are you learning Spanish?

(If yes) Can you describe how learning Spanish shaped the lessons you prepare for students?

Do you ever use Spanish in the classroom? Or in your assessments? How?

(If no) Do you speak languages other than English?

(If yes) Can you describe how learning that language shaped the lessons you prepare for students?

How do you make your level of Spanish work to your advantage?

What are some customs or practices that you have learned about from your Costa Rican students or colleagues?

What are some components of Costa Rican culture that you think impacts your teaching and assessment?

What do you learn from students that has shaped your teaching practice?

How do you read your students' behavior that would cause you to change your teaching practice?

How do you learn about Costa Rican culture?

In what ways do you teach your culture?

NESTs' perception of their teaching practice.

How would you describe your philosophy of teaching?

How would you describe your teaching practice?

Based on your response, what role does culture play in your teaching practice?

Concluding Questions

Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Interview 3 Questions

Audio Recording: *I will be recording this so I can review what you said after we are finished. I want to be able to be attentive to our conversation in the moment and still know that I can revisit what we have discussed. This will help me determine additional questions for our subsequent interviews. Do I have your permission to record this interview?*
If no, I will take written notes.

Instructions: *This last interview will help us wrap things up and come back to some points we did not fully address or left unanswered.*
Follow up from last interview. (Questions will be amended and redeveloped after the second interview).

In the last interview, regarding teaching you said, "...", Can you tell me more about that?

We also discussed..., do you have anything to add to that?

Successful and Detrimental teaching practices

How do you prepare classes?

What have been some of your teaching challenges?

What have been some of your teaching successes?

Have you felt personally shaped or changed by CR?

Have you felt personally shaped or changed by TEFL?

Do you see this as a long term career or a stepping stone to something else?

Are there any other things I have not asked that have shaped your teaching practice?

Concluding Questions

Do you have anything else you would like to add?

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